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**Young people's transitions to adulthood  
in Pilton, a disadvantaged  
neighbourhood in Edinburgh**

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**Birkbeck, University of London**

**PhD Youth Studies**

## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis is of my own composition, based on my own work, with acknowledgements of other sources, and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

**Eric Joseph Francis Carlin**

**Date: 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2017**

## **Abstract**

This thesis explores young people's experiences of transition into adulthood in Pilton, a disadvantaged neighbourhood in North Edinburgh, and considers how their social networks influence their perspectives and actions.

The stories are told of young people, aged 16–23, including the challenges they face, the richness and diversity of their experiences. Their transition experiences involve families, friends, leisure spaces and engagement with the labour market. The study is located within Elias' theoretical framework and highlights that strong social networks often flourish more strongly in contexts like this than in more affluent neighbourhoods.

The research questions are:

1. How do young people in Pilton experience and manage transitions to adulthood?
2. How do disadvantage, stigma and violence affect the daily lives and transition journeys of young people in Pilton?
3. How useful is the concept of social exclusion to describe young people's experiences in Pilton?
4. How helpful is the concept of resilience to support young people in Pilton?

Main data sources have been fieldwork, carried out between June 2012 and May 2013, mainly in Pilton Youth and Children's Project (PYCP). Desk-based and on-line research, including reviewing historical and contemporary documentation was undertaken to understand the context and to interrogate issues that arose – for example, to understand how embedded poverty and stigma has been throughout the history of Pilton.

The study includes consideration of the usefulness of the concepts of social inclusion/exclusion and resilience, both prolific in contemporary discussions about marginalised young people and what 'to do' about them. The case is made for reframing the two concepts, returning them to their original intentions, and placing more emphasis on reducing inequalities.

The challenges caused to young people by disadvantage, stigma and violence are significant. It is emphasised that these are faced within an unequal society, not as 'socially excluded'.

## **Acknowledgements**

Thank you to all the people who have supported me in undertaking this research. I hope that, by telling the stories of young people in Pilton, the richness and diversity of their social experiences will be appreciated and the disadvantage that many experience will be challenged.

More than anything, I want to thank the young people whom I observed and interviewed for their openness, honesty and generosity. It has truly been a life-affirming experience meeting you all.

I also wish to note my appreciation of the youth workers and other adults who shared their perspectives with me.

The research would not have been possible without the massive help given to me by the management and staff at PYCP, where most of the fieldwork was carried out. I have enjoyed getting to know you. I hope that your trust in me is justified by the final thesis.

I am grateful to my supervisors, Paul Watt, Linda Milbourne and William Ackah, who have provided excellent support and guidance throughout the research process.

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**Purpose of this study**

This study explores young people's experiences of transition into adulthood in Pilton, a disadvantaged neighbourhood in North Edinburgh, and considers how their social networks influence their perspectives and actions. As in other studies that have considered similar themes (MacDonald, 2009; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005, 2002; Shildrick et al., 2009; Shildrick and MacDonald, 2007), the research is premised on an assumption that, although many young people in poor neighbourhoods experience similar material disadvantages, their subjective experiences and responses vary. By telling the stories of young people, aged 16 – 23, I have intended to recognise, alongside the challenges they face, the richness and diversity of their experiences, including their changing relationships with families and friends, and their new terms of engagement with labour market and consumerist contexts.

The study is located within Elias' (1978) theoretical framework, which stresses that the individual forms part of the environment, his/her family and his/her society; thus, there is exploration of the dynamic networks in which people engage and the figurations that they form. Themes, such as common experiences of stigma and violence may be compared with other studies but comparisons with studies such as Wacquant's work (2008) in the USA and France that discuss the impact of feeling marginalised on young people's behaviours are tempered by an awareness that there are many differences between different social contexts and that individuals are different. The thesis will highlight that strong social networks can flourish more strongly in contexts like this than in more affluent neighbourhoods (Lupton, 2003; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005).

Elias and Scotson (1994) emphasise that the power imbalances in society and their manipulation by different groups are crucial factors in

understanding human figurations. Following this, the impetus for the critical sociologist who wishes to make an impact is to ensure that one's recommendations are delivered in an appropriate format and at the right time to those who have power. Without making unsupportable generalisations, I hope that this thesis will challenge perspectives that blame disadvantaged young people for their perceived failure in relation to widespread normative societal expectations. The study has included consideration of the usefulness of the concepts of social inclusion/exclusion and resilience, both prolific in contemporary discussions about marginalised young people and what 'to do' about them (Coles et al., 2000; France, 2007). It is intended that contemporary usage of these concepts might be reappraised so that structural understandings of inequality (McDowell, 2001) and how to reduce it, might be enhanced.

### **Focus of the study**

The research questions are as follows:

1. How do young people in Pilton experience and manage transitions to adulthood?
2. How do disadvantage, stigma and violence affect the daily lives and transition journeys of young people in Pilton?
3. How useful is the concept of social exclusion to describe young people's experiences in Pilton?
4. How helpful is the concept of resilience to support young people in Pilton?

The main data sources have been fieldwork, which was carried out between June 2012 and May 2013, mainly in Pilton Youth and Children's Project (PYCP), and in three other local venues. Desk-based and on-line research, including reviewing historical and contemporary documentation that describes the social, cultural and economic contexts of Pilton, was

undertaken throughout the research period to understand the context and to interrogate issues that arose – for example, to understand how embedded poverty and stigma has been in Pilton throughout its history.

### **Structure of this thesis**

Given the interconnectedness of the issues being explored, the research themes are explored, to varying extents, in every chapter. Specific chapters are allocated to discuss, in depth, social networks, meanings of becoming adult, labour market and leisure life transitions, stigma, issues related to violence and feeling safe, and the concept and application of resilience theory in Scottish youth policy. The final chapter brings together key arguments, conclusions and recommendations.

**Chapter Two, ‘Understanding young people’s experiences – research discussion’**, discusses academic literature that has relevance to the investigation and analyses young people’s experiences as they negotiate their transitions to adulthood in Pilton. Themes explored include the stereotyping of young people as ‘dangerous’, especially if sexually aware or active as ‘at risk’ or ‘in trouble’ especially if poor (Griffin, 1997a, pp. 10,14; Mac An Ghail, 1994; Stephen and Squires, 2004). I summarise the cultural studies and youth transitions emphases in youth studies. I will explain that, although my study draws on both approaches, its focus is more on youth transitions. I will also discuss the emphasis that the literature puts on the impact of stigma on disadvantaged young people’s social functioning and the labelling of some communities as a ‘moral underclass’ (Levitas, 2005).

I will describe how ‘social exclusion’ emerged as a theoretical framework that could capture the multiple and dynamic dimensions of poverty and deprivation (Butler and Watt, 2007; Milbourne, 2002a; Seddon, 2006). I will highlight how the concept’s original meanings have been distorted, so that, along with concepts such as resilience, more emphasis is placed in policy endeavours on encouraging individual agency rather than removing

structural disadvantages that affect poor, young people. While also acknowledging that social capital theory can provide insights into the relationships that young people in Pilton experience, I will also draw attention to critiques of the concept. My concluding comments highlight the need for more locally-based research to investigate transition experiences of young people.

**Chapter Three, ‘Pilton, past and present’**, draws on historical and contemporary records, including census and other government data, to describe the context of Pilton, where the young people in this study grew up, live and socialise. The chapter illustrates that young people in Pilton face a range of challenges related to structural socio-economic factors, over which they have little or no control. The geographical location is related to the rest of Edinburgh and PYCP, where observation sessions and most interviews take place, is shown to be in the centre of the scheme. Historical descriptions (Pilton Press Cuttings, Vol 1, 1832-1994 - from Edinburgh Room, Edinburgh Central Library ) describe how, from its beginnings, Pilton faced socio-economic and planning challenges and the stigmatisation of its populace. The destructive impact of the arrival of drugs and HIV/AIDS in the 1980s is also emphasised (Robertson and Richardson, 2007).

Accommodation in Pilton is cheap, compared to the rest of Edinburgh (Scotland’s census, 2016). This has attracted many new immigrants, making the ethnic breakdown of Pilton very different from the rest of Edinburgh (Scotland’s census, 2016). Socio-economic statistics (Scottish Government, 2012, 2009; Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics, 2015) indicate that Pilton is also very different from the rest of Edinburgh in a range of ways that disadvantage its populace; there are more lone parent households and higher levels of drug and alcohol and mental health problems. Educational attainment rates are poor and, post-school, unemployment rates are high. The Piltoners who work are far more likely than others to be engaged in ‘elementary’ or ‘unskilled’ jobs (Scotland’s census, 2016). Political arrangements, including attempts to the present, to

'regenerate' the scheme are summarised, but overall, there is shown to be a lack of consistency in these approaches.

**Chapter Four, 'Methodology and methods'**, describes the methodology and methods for the study. I draw specifically on the case study that Elias and Scotson (1994) employed in the 1960s to investigate the social perspectives of people in Winston Parva, Leicester. The case study is presented as an appropriate way to capture the complexities, multiple perspectives and range of experiences of young people as they establish adult identities and relationships (Yin, 2009, 1993). As the intention has been to allocate centre stage in the analysis to young people's perspectives, the richest sources of data came from 23 semi-structured interviews that were conducted with 26 young people. The fieldwork also included 16 participant observation sessions in Pilton Youth and Children's Project (PYCP), 9 semi-structured individual interviews with staff who work with local young people, interviews with two local politicians and two discussion sessions with local mothers.

I will explain how the fieldwork was carried out and draw extensively on my notes from observation sessions to reflect on my own changing attitudes to the study and to the place, as well as providing background information about the young people who were interviewed. I will describe how I have analysed my data, including how I have made decisions about what to include and what not to include. I will explain how I amended my approaches, where necessary, to accommodate the circumstances where the study was being carried out and to facilitate processes where I believed I would get the most honest and intimate responses from research participants. I will discuss how I initially positioned myself in relation to the research subjects and the methods I planned to use to manage my position as an outsider researcher. I will explain how this deliberately changed and the improvements that I believe that made to the quality of the feedback I received. Throughout, I retained a critical awareness of my own subjectivity in decision-making.

My intention has been to represent as truly as possible what I believe people showed and told me but the meanings that I ascribe to this are my meanings, not theirs. Nonetheless, I will argue that I believe that there is sufficient data here and comparable data elsewhere to be able to draw some general conclusions about common contemporary experiences of disadvantaged young people.

**Chapter Five, 'Local social networks'**, discusses young Piltoners', mainly local, social networks and how these influence their transition experiences. Discounting the idea that Piltoners can be defined as 'socially excluded', networks through which shared cultural traditions and norms are discussed, including extended family arrangements, which may be more important for young people here than in other, wealthier neighbourhoods (Lupton, 2003; Orthner et al., 2002). Relationships with mothers and, for some, with siblings, are stressed as important for many young people, for example in providing guidance and alerts to change behaviours which are becoming risky. Friendship networks are also important, and I focus specifically as a mini case study on a small friendship group whom I observed closely and interviewed, whom I nicknamed the 'Gang of Four'. The experiences and perceptions of these four young people illustrate the support that young people can give each other in challenging circumstances, but also how fragile this can be as childhood identities are replaced by adult ones.

**Chapter Six, 'Becoming adult'**, explores how young people experience the development of new adult identities, and the social and behavioural markers (Cote and Bynner, 2008) which affirm these. For some young people, this includes emotionally disengaging from previous friendships, notably where these friendships have included shared behaviours deemed by wider society to be unacceptable, such as involvement in groups perceived to be 'gangs' (Deuchar, 2009; Holligan and Deuchar, 2009; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005). For others, new experiences and new friendships are integrated into young people's lives, with little difficulty and old friendships and relationships are renegotiated.



Political engagement is described as a new, 'adult' activity; though few young people were actively engaged with political processes, some were stimulated into action by specific campaigns, such as opposition to the planned building of a wall to separate Pilton/Muirhouse from the wealthier suburb of Silverknowes. It is suggested that 'bonding' capital means that many young people in Pilton have a strong sense of belonging to a community, but that this may inhibit moves into other, possibly riskier, contexts beyond the locality.

Although young people have a strong sense of personal agency, their outcomes are shown to be uncertain and long-established friendships may be threatened by the behaviour changes that 'becoming adult' necessitates. Extended family networks seem generally to be more robust. As in other chapters, it is clear that young people in Pilton face many challenges but it is made clear that these challenges and the actions to overcome them take place within an unequal society, not as people 'excluded' from it, were that even to be possible.

**Chapter Seven, 'Labour market transitions'**, explores the experiences of young people in Pilton as they move through contexts of social and economic uncertainty, affected by structural factors, including globalisation (Gough et al., 2006; Harvey, 2005a, 2005b, 2004), which means that young people have limited ability to affect their employment outcomes. This causes considerable worry for many young people in Pilton. It is noted that, regardless of real opportunities, this move is made within a context where, with the influence of 'independent' think tanks such as the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ), obtaining paid work is seen as a moral success for individuals, with welfare dependency being seen as a moral failing (Centre for Social Justice, 2013, 2007). Discourses thrive that blame individuals and families in places like Pilton for their failure to succeed in a highly unequal labour market (Centre for Social Justice, 2013, 2007).

I will make reference to Standing's influential work, 'The Precariat' (Standing, 2014), where he describes how global economic changes have

led to the emergence of what he calls the 'precariat', a new dangerous class'. However, I will suggest that Standing's (2014) thesis fails to convince when considering young people's experiences in Pilton. Intergenerational continuities of poverty and insecurity, rather than the novelty that Standing emphasises, typify their experiences.

In discussing what young people said about their experiences, behaviours and attitudes in the labour market context, I suggest that they can be grouped under three headings - Planning, Searching and Drifting - but I avoid any suggestion of stasis. Young people are influenced by their experiences and a snapshot of their perspectives at another time might have led me to categorise individuals differently from this. The concluding section of this chapter emphasises that, as in other studies (for example, Mac An Ghail, 1994), although experiences are imbued with feelings of disappointment, uncertainty and fragmentation, nonetheless, the majority remain determined and stoic in their efforts to find paid work.

**Chapter Eight, 'Leisure life transitions'**, examines how young people in Pilton spend their leisure time and how this changes over time. As noted in Chapter Six, the reassessment and, for at least some, restructuring of relationships with friends and families, and moving into new leisure contexts can feel as important from young people's perspectives as labour market transitions. This is especially the case where labour market opportunities are uncertain. In their leisure lives, young people reflect about their situations and make choices that are important in marking their adult identities. Leisure activities include time spent at home with families, watching television or using internet-based games. They also include time spent outside the home, from informal 'muckin' about' in the local streets and parks to more formalised activities, for example, at local youth clubs. Standing's (2014) suggestion that youth leisure activities are passive is challenged. Instead, the complexity, dynamism and contradictory elements of young people's leisure activities in Pilton and the interconnectedness of individuals through leisure as they negotiate trajectories to adulthood is stressed.

The intersection between mainstream acceptable forms of leisure behaviours and activities deemed to be anti-social and/or criminal is explored. For some young people, engaging in criminal behaviours can bring social capital with peers, as well as a genuine excitement, while also bringing risks to oneself and others (Stephen and Squires, 2003). Being at risk of becoming a victim of crime can also reduce some people's ability to relax and have fun. In discussing the range of dilemmas that young people face in moving into adult leisure spaces and activities, as an example, their alcohol-related behaviours are compared to national data about young people (NHS Scotland, 2014a). It is shown that alcohol use by young people brings both pleasure and risks. The easy availability of drugs also impacts on young people's leisure activities and young Piltoners' tales are compared with national surveys (NHS Scotland, 2014b). In the conclusions, it is noted that, despite risks and dangers, young people in Pilton actively use their leisure time to build and maintain social capital with those around them, to have fun, to learn and to construct new adult identities.

**Chapter Nine, 'Stigma'**, explores power dynamics between people in and outside Pilton and also within the scheme. The theoretical context relies to a large extent on the classic text by Goffman (1963), which emphasises that stigma is related to power relationships between groups. Less powerful groups feel and experience stigma, which impacts on their sense of identity and social functioning. 'Disgraced' identity, according to Goffman (1963), is accepted as normal by those who stigmatise and those who are stigmatised.

The issue of why stigma pertains to young people and to disadvantaged neighbourhoods is explored, as is how a negative identity has been ascribed to Pilton and its people over generations. Young people's relationships with people and places in other parts of the city as they construct adult identities and move into adult leisure activities, such as frequenting pubs and clubs in the city centre, are discussed. I will also discuss the hierarchies that exist within this generally stigmatised

community; thus, groups who are frequently derogated in the media and political discourse, such as single mothers, welfare claimants, problem drug and alcohol users and suspected paedophiles are laid open to criticism by young people, who likely regard themselves as more 'respectable'.

Finally, I will consider some attitudes expressed about new immigrants, notably a growing Polish population. In doing so, I will compare and contrast these with Elias and Scotson's classic text, 'The Established and the Outsiders' (Elias and Scotson, 1994), which analyses the experiences of a working-class community in 'Winston Parva', Leicestershire in the early 1960s. Although in both contexts, there were strong feelings of antipathy towards newcomers, I will suggest that, unlike in 'Winston Parva', in the contemporary Scottish context, this may be related to some sense that, going forward, the newcomers' social networks might be more cohesive than those of the 'old' Piltoners.

**Chapter Ten, 'Feeling and being safe'**, responds to the priority that young people's accounts gave to the consideration of risk of physical danger; this seemed like a constant in everybody's lives and it was often the first issue raised in interviews. The impact on young people's social functioning, including their personal involvement as perpetrators, and strategies that they employ to protect themselves, are emphasised. The support that young people receive from family and friends is stressed as an important factor in their lives, in contrast with what is generally felt to be an absence of support from the police.

Most violence takes place on the streets, though some people also described feeling threatened in their own homes, sometime by outsiders, sometimes by other family members. The youth centre, PYCP, is generally regarded as a safe haven; however, even here, the violence from outside sometimes creeps in. I provide a personal account of three situations when I felt unsafe in the course of my observations in PYCP, which possibly

helped me to empathise with how many of these young people feel in their daily lives.

In considering why young people become perpetrators of violence against each other, I am convinced by the notion that there is peer pressure, not in the sense necessarily of people encouraging you to do things that you did not want to do, but more in the sense that engaging in violent acts yourself can also be one of the tactics employed to ensure that you do not yourself become a victim. There are other ways to protect yourself. These include making yourself as invisible as possible, fairly innocuously perhaps through not standing out by how you dress. As discussed in relation to one young man, John's, behaviour at school, this can also involve behaviours which can do harm to yourself. It is also the case that much of the violence that young people experience is not reported to anyone.

In exploring reasons why violent behaviour may have become a social norm in Pilton. I have supported the position of Goffman (1963) that violent behaviour is learned behaviour that may confirm individuals' sense of social disgrace, and also of Wacquant (2008) that violence in marginalised communities can be a response to feeling weak or powerless within society – comprehensible, though often self-harming. I reject the suggestion that young people in Pilton are inherently more likely to be violent than other young people. In my conclusion, I argue that the social behaviours of individuals in Pilton in relation to violence are dynamically interconnected with the behaviours of others, the social networks in which they engage and the socio-economic circumstances that they inhabit.

**Chapter Eleven, 'Resilience'**, discusses the emphasis on resilience in GIRFEC, Getting it Right for Every Child, (Scottish Government, 2012), the bulwark of the Scottish government's aspirations youth policy, and questions the methodological basis for the Scottish policy. I draw on interview data to make an assessment about whether the young people in this study could be considered to have suffered 'significant threat or serious adversity' (Luthar et al., 2000b, p.543). However, unlike some

other researchers (for example, Williams et al., 2001), I avoid making subjective judgements to label any of these young people as 'resilient'. I focus on the use of the term 'resilience' by Tom, a young person who has grown up locally and is now working in a residential care home for young people and living in Silverknowes. I demonstrate how his usage highlights the imprecise and contradictory meanings that are implied within the resilience framework. In my conclusions, it is suggested that young people might face fewer threats and adversities if public policy were to focus more on reducing structural disadvantage, rather than encouraging individual resilience.

**Chapter Twelve, 'Discussion and conclusions'** summarises key themes. I stress the influence of the sociological theory of Elias on the investigation, methods employed and conclusions drawn. I emphasise the important contribution that the evidence gathered makes to understanding youth transitions in a context of disadvantage. While not understating the inequalities and challenges that young people face, including, though not limited to, their engagement with the labour market. I emphasise that young people experience an ever-prevalent sense of threat of danger, and are at risk due to social behaviours, such as drug use and unsafe sex.

However, alongside this, I also stress the extensive evidence in Pilton of social networks and personal agency, challenging 'underclass' notions that serve to stigmatise. I highlight similarities and differences between my findings in Pilton and other similar studies and I consider how this investigation has expanded theoretical perspectives about youth transitions, social exclusion and resilience. I discuss my methods and reflect on how these validate this study, also suggesting areas where my learning would inform future explorations.

Priorities for future research include making sure that transitions research is always multifaceted. In methods employed and conclusions drawn researchers need to recognise the complexity and dynamism of youth experiences and prioritise efforts to understand their perspectives. With

political will, this could inform the reframing of youth policy, so as to better support young people in places like Pilton.

## **Chapter Two: Understanding young people's experiences – research discussion**

### **Introduction**

This chapter discusses academic literature that deals with themes relevant to this study. First, studies that argue for the importance of empirical research with disadvantaged young people are presented (for example, Gunter and Watt, 2009; Mac An Ghaill, 1994; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; Marshall and Stenner, 1997; Watt, 2006). The interconnectedness of human social experience that Elias (1983) emphasises reinforces this argument. It is also pointed out that although disadvantaged young people may have many similar experiences and little control over their outcomes in relation to issues such as employment, individuals have 'bounded' agency (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; Thomson, 2009), in the opportunities they have to manage in their daily lives and to plan ahead. Therefore, it is argued, empirical research such as this can illuminate these issues, sometimes challenging researchers' pre-conceptions (Fergusson, 2002).

Literature is explored (for example, Gough et al., 2006; Harvey, 2005a, 2005b, 2004; Levitas, 2005) that suggests that contemporary capitalism embodies the power struggles that Elias (1983, p.262) suggests are central to the 'social dances' in which we all engage. There is also a discussion of how poor, young people are particularly susceptible to misuse of power by others.

Cultural studies and transitions approaches to Youth Studies are then discussed (for example, Butler and Watt, 2007; Cohen, 1997; France, 2007; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; Pollock, 2008). The paucity of historical and contemporary studies that focus on capturing their subjective experiences is lamented, with a notable exception being the range of studies conducted over several years in Teesside (see inter alia, MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; Shildrick et al., 2009). It is also noted that



transitions studies tend to focus on labour market transitions. Standing's influential thesis (Standing, 2014), that argues that a new class has become precarious as a result of changes in the global economic system that impact on local labour markets, is discussed, but it is suggested that the novelty he describes may be more relevant in discussing more privileged contexts than Pilton.

The argument is presented that the concept of 'social exclusion', which was developed as a means to try to capture the multi-faceted nature and dynamic nature of contemporary poverty (Butler and Watt, 2007; Milbourne, 2002a; Seddon, 2006), has been distorted from its original purposes. It is also suggested that the theory of resilience, which Luthar et al. (2000b) argue was originally intended to emphasise an assets-based approach to youth policy, instead tends to emphasise personal responsibility, to such an extent that actions to reduce structural disadvantages that disproportionately affect poor young people are evaded. The attention that social capital theory pays to the networks which Elias (1983) stresses should be the primary foci of sociology is discussed, including the fact that richer social groups are more likely than young people in Pilton to have the type of social capital that enables them to succeed in economic terms. The conclusion of the chapter emphasises the need for more empirical research to explore subjective experiences of disadvantaged young people.

### **Personal experiences of disadvantaged young people**

Fergusson (2002) warns that researchers bring their own pre-conceptions to the research context, influenced by their own values and historical experiences, and that they need to be open to considering alternative realities that challenge how they would expect or like the world to be. For example, whereas we might expect disadvantaged people to feel disadvantaged, we must also be open, for example, to the idea that, what we perceive as challenges – for example, with some young people in Pilton, teenage pregnancy - they might embrace as opportunities.

Watt (2006) argues that the experiences of working class people are also often homogenised and that this can give rise to their representation in academic literature and the media as an 'underclass', with moral failings that entrench them at the 'bottom' of society. In contrast to this, an approach to sociological inquiry that, by following Elias (1983), analyses the networks and figurations that young people inhabit enables us to understand the complexities of life in marginalised neighbourhoods. As an illustration of this kind of approach, Gunter and Watt (2009) note from a study in East London that young black men tended more than young white men to have conventional views of success and to value what the researchers describe as 'clean' work, i.e., not 'dirty' manual labour. Watt (2006) also found that racist and anti-racist views can co-exist in the same localities and peer groups.

A research approach that prioritises exploration of young people's own accounts of their experiences can enable us to understand individual and group behaviours, including those that run counter to mainstream conventions of 'acceptability'; for example, we can learn about why some young people develop 'alternative' informal working practices and sometimes criminal behaviours. As an example of this kind of research, Stephen and Squires (2003) carried out a case study in Sussex, where vehicle taking had become for some marginalised young men, a sign of status within their community. Within these illegal behaviour patterns, the young men evolved rules that were shared and understood to regulate 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' behaviours. For example, they had a widely understood moral code not to steal the cars of disabled people or cars with baby seats. Similarly, in their investigation of how young people deal with risks in everyday life, Parkes and Conolly (2011a) argue that the assessment and management of risk, including the adoption of behaviours, such as carrying a knife, that might either afford protection or cause more trouble for individuals can be seen as part of the development of young people's social identities, rather than simply being deemed 'anti-social'.

Elias (1978) emphasises that our networks form the basis of our social identity, which is experienced at the same time as individual and collective; thus, he suggests that individuals have unique experiences, each of which emerges from a distinctive configuration that exists for a fleeting moment and then passes. In 'The Civilizing Process Volume 1: The History of Manners' (1983, p. 260), Elias argues that,

The notion of individuals deciding, acting, and 'existing' in absolute independence of one another is an artificial product of men...which...rests partly on a confusion of ideals and facts and partly on a reification of individual self-control mechanisms.

In their important review of youth and social change, Furlong and Cartmel (1997) suggest that Elias' conceptualisation of society provides some explanation for why young people feel individually responsible for what happens to them and why so many are filled with feelings of helplessness. They argue that, especially in poor communities, 'powerful chains of interdependency' prevail, affecting young people in particular. Furlong and Cartmel (1997, p. 114) suggest that some of the problems faced by young people in modern Britain stem from their and others' attempts to negotiate difficulties on an individual level:

Blind to the existence of powerful chains of interdependency, young people frequently attempt to resolve collective problems through individual action and hold themselves responsible for their inevitable failure.

This is also borne out by Macdonald and Marsh's (2005) research in Teesside, where they conclude. that young people 'usually prioritised responsibility for their own actions and shied away from social structural explanations' for perceived failures (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005, p. 196).

## **Localised experiences in neighbourhoods and ‘bounded agency’**

In ‘The Established and the Outsiders’ (1994), Elias and Scotson frame local communities as particularly important types of figurations. They stress that trying to understand individual behaviours independently of the power-based figurations formed by different groups is a meaningless endeavour. Instead, their investigation seeks to understand the nature of the interdependences and individual beliefs, attitudes and behaviours are framed as representations of the variety of beliefs, attitudes and behaviours current in the community (Elias and Scotson, 1994).

Many other studies discuss the importance of neighbourhood in influencing group and individual behaviours of young people. For example, Brent (2009) argues that quantitative research studies and surveys can only transpose description of a neighbourhood into lists of figures or into a shape, when, subjectively, the local area can mean different things to individuals and groups at different times. Elliott et al. (2006) find that a sense of personal security for young people is often gained by identification with a small physical place where they live, have a social life, a sense of self and some historical continuity. Lupton (2003) argues that individuals’ perceptions are shaped by their activities, networks and patterns. She (Lupton, 2003) describes the diversity that this creates; for example, how people in disadvantaged communities talk about the importance of community, while at the same time they might allude to conflict areas by defining community through, for example, commonplace, illegal economic activities.

It is clear from the literature that young people’s relationship to place is complex and dynamic (see inter alia, MacDonald and Marsh, 2005). However, although each young person’s experience is unique, structural social inequalities are reproduced and the concentration of people in difficult situations in particular neighbourhoods adds to the difficulties of their social experiences (Healey, 2003). MacDonald and Marsh’s (2005) important research in Teesside resembles my study in terms of what it

tried to learn and the theoretical approach taken. MacDonald and Marsh's study (2005) was larger and included a broader ethnographic approach and follow-up episodes over a longer period of time than was possible here but their framing of the research questions to consider young people's subjective experiences of transition matched my approach in Pilton. Both studies included exploring leisure activities, licit and illicit behaviours, such as involvement in petty crime, violence and alcohol and drug use, as well as the move into the labour market.

Researchers' pre-conceptions are often challenged when they undertake research that prioritises young people's perspectives. For example, Fergusson (2002) describes his research with young people in the Midlands from 1996 to 1998. He argues that, although young people's trajectories may be discontinuous, interrupted by periods of inactivity, for some young people this opens up new subjectivities of being young and having new choices to make. Although, objectively, young people's material transitions after education were becoming increasingly unstable, there was not a unitary reaction to this. Some young people became 'disaffected', while others embraced opportunities to combine part-time studentship and flexible employment with (albeit limited) opportunities to continue to take part in 'consumer' society. Likewise, in Drumchapel in Glasgow, researchers expected that young people would seem 'disaffected', but McKendrick et al. (2007) note that young people tended to have generally positive outlooks on their current lives and future prospects. Significant majorities aspired to jobs of moderate or high social standing and expected to secure such jobs. Most young people whom they interviewed envisaged taking post-school education or training to improve employment prospects and they believed that they already possessed skills that would enhance their employability.

Two studies that examined the experience of young people in areas affected by deindustrialisation also found responses that countered researchers' expectations. For example, Mac An Ghail (1994) suggests that, with less historical baggage, the 'Black and Asian Macho Lads' he

studied were less affected by the decline of old industries than he had thought they would be. In a similar vein, Hall et al. (2009) carried out research with young people in Ebbw Vale, South Wales, where the decline of old industries had led to high levels of unemployment and poverty. Researchers thought that they would hear stories of difficult coping in a context of massive change from young people whose families had for generations worked in the mining and steel industries. On the contrary, most young people did not consider themselves as having had to struggle. They described their life experiences as rather mundane and the researchers conclude that, contrary to their prior expectations, young people of Ebbw Vale 'are living with and through change, as much as they are stalled or traumatized' (Hall et al., 2009, p. 554).

### **'Emerging adulthood'**

Many researchers (Fergusson, 2002; Stephen and Squires, 2003) emphasise the risks that young people face in an uncertain labour market situation. A contrasting perspective is suggested by Arnett (2006b). From his research with students in Higher Education he generalises to assert that the changing nature of society, due to globalisation, has positively expanded choice and options for most young people. He proposes the use of a new term, 'emerging adulthood', to describe what he considers to be a new life phase. He asserts that it is the most self-focussed age of life and that it offers possibilities, when hopes flourish, when people have an unparalleled opportunity to transform their lives (Arnett, 2006b). Arnett (2006b) considers individual qualities, rather than transitional events, as marking adulthood.

Arnett's (2006b) claims have been challenged by many writers. For example, from his own empirical research, Molgat (2007) argues that Arnett's concept of 'emerging adulthood' downplays structural dimensions of social life (gender, ethnicity, class, labour, housing and social policy). Molgat (2007) also questions how Arnett (2006b) can both describe 'emerging adulthood' as a general experience and treat as exceptions those who do not fit the model he proposes, such as teenage parents.

Hendry and Kloep (2010) suggest that Arnett (2006b) does not take into account the significance and importance of the interactions of various elements, such as self-agency, individual life experiences and health, relationships, economic and social changes, structural forces, and a problematic labour market, to understand the diversity of human responses to extended periods of change, including the transitions to adulthood. Cote and Bynner (2008) suggest that, even within the narrow framework of his own research with middle class American students, Arnett (2006b) mistakes their coping mechanisms in an environmental context over which they have little control for freely chosen options to delay their entry into adulthood.

In my view, Arnett's assertions (2006b) are myopic in their failure to recognise that a neoliberal world does not just open up opportunities; it can also serve to disadvantage even more those who begin with few material advantages, such as young people in Pilton. Young people in Pilton and Teesside would be better characterised as having 'bounded agency' – 'structurally rooted, subjectively perceived frames for action and decision' (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005, p. 142), highly restricted, especially in the labour market context by their disadvantaged situations. As Thomson (2009) has pointed out, 'bounded agency' can mean that disadvantaged young people have a sense of where they fit and where they do not fit and their options are effectively restricted.

### **Elias and neoliberalism**

Elias proposes that the power dynamics and 'balance of tensions' (Elias, 1978, p. 132), which lead to the rise and fall of groups within configurations, the unfurling of 'the dynamics of social interweavings' (Elias, 1978, p. 29) should be at the centre of sociological investigations. He also (Elias, 1978) suggests that the idea that we can have an individual existence or act as individuals is a characteristic of a particular stage in the development of our self-perception rather than being a 'reality'. Instead, he states that, 'the individual forms part of the environment, his family, his

society' (Elias, 1978, p. 13). In this study in Pilton, I have aimed to describe and interpret structural disadvantages and individual responses rather than make a dualistic value judgement about what happens to individuals. As in Elias' research (1978), human life is presented as complex and dynamic, though outcomes for individuals are difficult to predict.

The political philosophy of neoliberalism emphasises freedom of investment, capital flows and trade in all goods and services, including living organisms and intellectual property (Ferguson, 2004). Arguments against neoliberalism by academics such as Harvey (2005, 2004) support Elias' (1978) framing of contemporary social structures and movements as inter-connected and dynamic. The individualism that characterises the neoliberal world view has been described as a hegemony, pervading all contemporary thinking and social practices (Gough et al., 2006; Harvey, 2004). Within the neoliberal context, as Harvey points out (2005), sparse attention is given to group processes and individuals are considered to be a mere factor of production in a capitalist consumerist world. Harvey argues that, for all its emphasis on the individual, the neoliberal project can be viewed as a contemporary manifestation of power struggles between groups (Harvey, 2005, 2004), with arguments about individual freedom and liberty being used as a justification and legitimisation for the acts of one more powerful class against another (Harvey, 2004).

There has been considerable debate about how far the differences between the 'New Labour' UK governments from 1997 - 2010 and previous Conservative administrations were more down to rhetoric than substance (Ferguson, 2004, 2002; Levitas, 2005; Milbourne, 2002a). Ferguson (2004) makes a convincing case that New Labour embraced neoliberalism, citing that their fiscal and economic policies included having the lowest corporation tax in Europe and less market regulation than the USA. Gough et al. (2006) suggest that New Labour policies would better be described as 'conservative interventionism' which uses different rhetoric, including rights as well as responsibilities. They also argue (Gough et al., 2006) that New Labour policies were designed to make low-paying jobs more



attractive to people on benefits and to improve their living standards while in work. 'Pure' neoliberalism would see these as distortions of the market. France (2007, p. 86) emphasises the impact that this has had on youth policies, which would disproportionately and adversely affect young people in places like Pilton:

Schools fail to create the right sort of opportunities for young people or fail to raise their educational levels, or individuals lack personal aspiration and self-belief, have personal failings or are held back by the 'culture of poverty' and their lack of self-responsibility. Within this argument poverty and structural factors are usually given marginal recognition.

### **The 'problematizing' of youth as a power game**

Elias (1983) argues that social relations are constructed that lead more powerful groups to exploit less powerful groups. The way that youth policy and discourse has evolved over the last century could be seen within this context as the actions of a more powerful group (adults) over a less powerful group (young people), typical of the changing power configurations that Elias (1983) describes. Concern about youth as a 'problem' precedes the early twentieth century sociologist Hall (France, 2007), who framed adolescence as a period of 'storm and stress' where young people had to have the space and opportunities to achieve their potential while learning to suppress and manage their biological changes through self-control. However Hall's analysis (France, 2007) had a significant impact throughout the twentieth century in shaping attitudes in psychology, criminology as well as in public discourse. Increasingly, policy responses have been premised on the idea that young people have to be controlled and managed. More often than not, poor and working class young people, such as the young people in this study, have been deemed to be especially problematic (France, 2007).

Concerns about what constitutes the 'youth problem' are often imprecise (Coles et al., 2000) but nonetheless in the public mind, young people's role in their communities is often perceived as negative and disruptive (Henderson, 2007; Kelly, 2003). There have also consistently been strong gender-specific prejudices in what the nature of the youth 'problem' is deemed to be; for example, young men, especially if black and/or working class, are typically portrayed as risky or trouble; young women, especially if sexually aware or active as 'at risk' or 'in trouble' (Griffin, 1997b, pp. 10, 14; Mac An Ghaill, 1994). As Kelly (2003) points out, policies that seek to control young people are often couched in justifying discourses, including that without punitive interventions, youth, constructed in a narrative of becoming, of transition, is at risk of jeopardising, through present behaviours and dispositions, their desired futures. A range of studies (Hollingworth and Williams, 2009; Jones, 2012; McDowell, 2003; Roberts, 2011; Shildrick et al., 2009) has also discussed how poor, white young working class people have been denigrated, under the guise of 'harmless light entertainment or unreflective, uncritical social science' (Shildrick et al., 2009, p. 460) and linked to what Shildrick et al. (2009, p.460) term 'social pathologies', including,

welfare dependency, moral degeneracy, academic failure, fecklessness, and excessive and tasteless consumption as if these were (a) accurate depictions of their life situations, (b) the common problems of all, and (c) rooted in individual failings.

Parkes and Conolly (2011b) suggest that conflicting stereotypes of young people portray them either as 'Dionysian', inheritors of 'original sin' or 'Appolonian', in possession of an innate goodness, that can be corrupted by the social world. Of course, neither of these extremes accurately captures the diversity of young people and their dynamic social networks (Elias, 1983). Nonetheless, for many people, including policy makers, young people such as those in this study seem more dangerous than vulnerable. Their performances conflict with 'prevailing notions of innocent dependent childhood and static mature adult status' (Griffin, 1997b, p. 7)

and 'acceptable' forms of rebellion, typified by behaviours of young people in wealthier neighbourhoods. As an illustration, this study found similarities to Shildrick et al.'s (2009) study in Teesside, where young people were judged to demonstrate a stoicism to routine stopping and questioning by police during their normal leisure activities, while at the same time they felt that the police were powerless and/or unwilling to act to protect them.

## **Two main approaches to youth studies**

Two main approaches, which overlap, have characterised the study of young people's lives: the cultural studies approach and the youth transitions approach. As Butler and Watt (2007) point out, youth studies have also been influenced by intersecting theoretical approaches, including feminism, poststructuralism and postmodernism. There has also been increased interest in issues of gender and ethnicity and in space, place and the impact of globalisation (Butler and Watt, 2007).

## **Youth cultural studies**

Based on Marxist and ethnographic approaches, an underlying theme throughout cultural studies in the 1960s and 1970s was that there were identifiable class identities and shared experiences, including struggles and rebellion. This included, for example, studies of sub-cultures of mods, rockers and skinheads which were represented as symbolic attempts by working class youth to counter hegemonic cultural forms via 'resistance through rituals' (Butler and Watt, 2007). An example of youth cultural studies is the collection of essays published between 1969 and 1989 where Cohen (1997) describes his experiences of living and working in London in the 1970s, the narratives people used to describe histories and, for example, explores meanings of fighting for working class men. More recently, Butler and Watt (2007) have argued that cultural studies has focussed on what is perceived as the fragmented and episodic nature of young people's leisure and consumption activities which, they claim, renders the notion of class-based subcultures redundant.

Some studies (Alexander, 2000; Thomson, 2009) have examined subcultural groups, such as what they term 'gangs' and found examples of group identity expressed through shared dress styles, music and leisure activities. They argue that, in such contexts, the agency of young people remains bounded, to varying degrees, by issues such as race, ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality. McCulloch et al. (2006), from a study in Edinburgh and Newcastle, conclude that young people's subcultural styles and identities are very bound up with social class. They identify four main subcultural groups of young people: 'goths', 'skaters', 'chavs/charvas/neds' and 'others'. Although they accept the premise that young people's futures are less predictable than in the past, they also find that group identities expressed through dress give young people a sense of belonging. However, they argue that identities are very class-based, with, for example, 'chavs/charvas/neds' tending to come from lower social classes and 'goths' and 'skaters' coming from a wider range and, more often, higher social classes. They also suggest variations between the groups, related to class and socio-economic status, about what helps to constitute collective identity. With 'goths', they argue that music is the uniting factor whereas 'chavs' or 'charvas' tend or 'neds' to come from the same disadvantaged area. They argue that social class limits sub-cultural choice for those at the 'bottom'. For example, although there is some opportunity for moving through other groups, it is difficult to be a 'chav/charva/ned' unless you are born into it and live in a particular geographical area. With its social and economic disadvantages and stigmatised reputation, Pilton would undoubtedly be such an area.

## **Youth transitions**

In considering the inter-connected trajectories of young people's social lives, the youth transitions concept is useful in its provision of a metaphor to account for both the structural limitations within which young people find themselves and the possibilities that they have to make choices to influence the direction of their transitions to adulthood (Pollock, 2008). Within the transitions framework, youth has generally been described as a

life stage, with the markers at its end stage signalling a move from dependence to independence (France, 2007). Such markers might include the shift from full time education into further and higher education and into the employment market, changing residence to rent or buy one's own home, co-habiting with a partner or having a baby, though also paying attention to how variables such as gender, class and ethnicity impact on these. Many studies (Catan, 2004; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; MacDonald and Shildrick, 2010) have argued that a reduced demand for skilled labour, increased youth unemployment, less on-job training and more job insecurity has meant that increasing numbers of young people from all backgrounds now have to stay longer in further education, training and higher education, so that youth transitions last longer than in the past, as well as being more complex and risky and economically fluid.

MacDonald and Marsh (2005) argue that youth studies are neglectful when they consider transitions solely or mainly in relation to the labour market context. With others, (Barry, 2005a, 2005b), they discuss the sociological importance of other transitions, such as the move into new family formations and into criminal and/or drug careers (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005). It has also been noted that, although young people may live with their parents for longer than past generations did, they also increasingly engage in 'adult' practices such as contributing to the family economy, looking after younger siblings, driving, voting, drinking and having sex (Te Riele, 2004). MacDonald and Marsh (2001) also suggest that the transitions marked by more advantaged young people as important are more likely to be related to work, whereas for disadvantaged young people, transitions are more likely to be marked as including parenthood, unemployment and crime, even when interwoven with periods of work, typically in low-paid, casual jobs.

### **Normative transitions**

Several scholars (Bynner, 2005; Raffo and Reeves, 2000) argue that normative concepts about what constitutes a successful transition can

increase social inequality by failing to take account of the fact that how well individuals fare depends largely on location and individual cultural capital – their education, skills, networks and contacts and other resources. It has also been argued that the metaphor of pathways implies that young people who get lost on the path to adulthood have only themselves to blame (Te Riele, 2004). The framing of youth as a transition period can lead to neglect of young people's current welfare and educational needs and acknowledgement of their current achievements (Mannion, 2005). Roberts (2011) has also drawn attention to what he describes as the 'missing middle', young working class people whom he describes as having had a modicum of educational success but whose voices are notably absent in the literature which focusses on a dichotomy of polarised experiences whereby young people are typically portrayed as 'sinkers' or 'swimmers'. From research with young men in low level retail positions in Kent, he argues that whereas working class transitions into employment, parenthood or leaving home typically happen earlier than for the middle classes, there is a group of young people who straddle a hybrid version of transition.

### **Labour market transitions – continuing patterns or new precarity?**

Although, as argued above, I would emphasise the importance of considering the range of life changes that constitute transitions for young people, most of the literature concentrates on transitions into the labour market. Labour market transitions for young people have historically been presented as linear and predictable (Chamberlain, 1989; Craine and MacDonald, 1997; Willis, 1977). However, some writers (for example, Mac An Ghaill, 1994; Shildrick and MacDonald, 2007) argue that structural social and economic changes mean that the material experiences of young people nowadays are different from in the past, with poor young people disproportionately affected. It is asserted that disadvantaged young people have to negotiate transitions at an earlier age than more socially advantaged young people (Roberts, 2005a) and that they are faced by the prospect of 'patchwork careers' characterised by part-time and casualised

jobs interspersed with periods of unemployment or as having to find their way through a plethora of training and other schemes (Bynner, 2005).

Although this assertion is correct, I share with other researchers (Goodwin and O'Connor, 2009, 2005b; MacDonald and Shildrick, 2010) some scepticism about whether the experiences of individuals in poor communities have necessarily changed so much. There is substantial compelling evidence (Abrams and Brown, 2010; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009, 2007, 2006) that material disadvantage has been a constant over decades in the same communities, with significant impacts on all areas of people's lives, including health, social functioning, educational achievement and employment.

From their reviews of Elias' unfinished 1960s school-work study in Leicester, Goodwin and O'Connor (2005b) conclude that, as experienced by individuals, school-labour market transitions in the 1960s were as imbued with angst as they are nowadays. They propose that earlier researchers have understated the complexities of subjective transition because they were more interested in exploring political themes of the time, notably issues related to class and gender. They suggest that then, as now, school-labour market transitions were characterised by both individual level complexity as well as shared experiences of labour market instability. Many researchers (European Group for Integrated Social Research, 2001; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997) agree that old structures of social inequality in the labour market context endure to the present, with consequent outcomes in relation to opportunities for individuals. Roberts (2005a) argues that, while the path to Oxbridge, the City of London and the civil service have survived through generations, it is not a new thing that working class people bear the brunt of fluctuations in the labour market. Moreover, he argues (Roberts, 2005a) that working-class young people have been subjected to a series of social experiments designed to make them 'employable', without any structural changes to reduce their relative disadvantage. Thus, he contends (Roberts, 2005a, pp. 129–130) that,

successive cohorts of less-qualified young people have faced BTECs, CPVEs, GNVQs, and the series of training and other schemes intended to rebuild their bridges to work – the Work Experience Programme (1976), the Youth Opportunities Programme (1978), the Young Workers' Scheme (1982), the Youth Training Scheme (1983), then, in the 1990s, National Traineeships, Modern Apprenticeships and the New Deal.

Vickerstaff (2003) also challenges the idea that modern-day transitions whereby young people move from having a 'child' to an 'adult' identity are necessarily more prolonged than in the past. She interviewed thirty people who undertook apprenticeships between 1944 and 1982 and concludes, on the contrary, that, throughout the period, apprenticeship was experienced as an institutionalised form of prolonging, an intermediate step between childhood and adulthood, rather than a one-step transition to mature status. The emphasis on transition to employment as the prime marker of adult status may have skewed the interpretation of such historical experiences.

Contemporary transitions have been described as being 'located in and structured by the institutional settings of education and training, welfare systems and the gateways into the labour market' (European Group for Integrated Social Research, 2001, p. 108). Thus, wealth and position in broader society and the support systems that operate in the neighbourhoods where young people grow up are important influences as young people move towards and enter the labour market. More well-off young people are more likely to have networks that bring social capital (Barnes, 2005) that may link them to employment opportunities. However, the social capital that young people have in poorer neighbourhoods like Pilton may be more likely to support their social functioning and networking within their local community than to offer stable, long term employment opportunities. Nonetheless, the marked shift from school to labour market opens up possibilities for young people to review and adjust their identity in



a changed material context. There are opportunities to review experiences and relationships and to make changes where this seems necessary.

Elias warns against thinking that human experience is ever static. His humans constantly move, rearranging the figurations of power that they form with other humans in society (Elias, 1978). Elias (1983, p.262) typifies human beings as constantly engaging in 'social dances' with each other, with the sociological task being to describe and try to comprehend these movements. To continue that metaphor, in the period of transition from being a youth to being adult, and exemplified in the move from full time education into new contexts, including the labour market, the spinning gets faster and faster. Young people in Pilton need a strong partner to teach them the steps and to hold and guide them as the room – the uncertain economic world - spins around them. Globalisation at local level has removed the strong arms that might have previously offered guidance and support – in the form of local jobs, working class jobs for working class men (Willis, 1977). The risk is that a young person will panic and fall to the floor and that when he/she picks him/herself up again, someone else, perhaps more qualified, more socially connected, richer, younger, depending on how long the other was down for, has taken the dance place. Meanwhile, the dance continues.

Standing (2014) has presented an influential case about the widening nature of precariousness across contemporary society. His thesis relates exclusively to the labour market context. He argues that global socio-economic and political changes have led to the development of what he defines as the 'precariat', a 'new dangerous class', bound together by the common experience of lacking the forms of security, as laid out in Figure 2.1.

### **Forms of Labour Security under Industrial Citizenship**

**Labour market security** – Adequate income-earning opportunities; at the macro-level, this is epitomised by a government commitment to ‘full employment’.

**Employment security** – Protections against arbitrary dismissal, regulations on hiring and firing, imposition of costs on employers for failing to adhere to rules and so on.

**Job security** – Ability and opportunity to retain a niche in employment, plus barriers to skill dilution, and opportunities for ‘upward’ mobility in terms of status and income.

**Work security** – Protection against accidents and illness at work, through, for example, safety and health regulations, limits on working time, unsociable hours, night work for women, as well as compensation for mishaps.

**Skill reproduction security** – Opportunity to gain skills, through apprenticeships, employment training and so on, as well as opportunity to make use of competencies.

**Income security** – Assurance of an adequate stable income, protected through, for example, minimum wage machinery, wage indexation, comprehensive social security, progressive taxation to reduce inequality and to supplement low incomes.

**Representation security** – Possessing a collective voice in the labour market, through, for example, independent trade unions, with a right to strike.

**Figure 2.1: Forms of Labour Security under Industrial Citizenship (Standing, 2011, p. 17)**

Underlying Standing’s thesis is his contention that macro-level socio-economic change, including de-industrialisation and globalisation, has had a permanent impact on the contemporary labour market. Personal experiences of economic policies that have emphasised deregulation and flexible working arrangements, seem to have given Standing’s argument an emotional validity for swathes of the population who may feel that their positions have changed, for the worse, in recent decades. However, Standing’s theory relies on subjects’ perceptions of change. This may be the case in richer areas than in Pilton, where, as discussed in Chapter Seven, I was not convinced that young people regarded current difficulties

in the labour market with a historical perspective, let alone with a sense that there had been a massive change, compared to what previous generations had experienced.

To illustrate what may have changed for young people moving into adulthood since the 1950s and now, Furlong and Cartmel (1997) offer the use of travel metaphors. In the past, they assert, the journey would be by train so that where your destination was set out in advance but you had company along with you. Nowadays, using the metaphor of a car, you have more choice about where you go but you travel on your own. However, they also add that the car driver's choice is constrained by his/her socio-economic position. This is an interesting way of framing the discussion but it can only describe material facts. In any event, the paucity of historical empirical research exploring individuals' subjective transition experiences renders general assertions about these as dubious and partial.

### **Contemporary poverty and 'social exclusion'**

Abel-Smith and Townsend (1965) noted that existing definitions of 'poverty' were inadequate to describe the deprivation that specific individuals experience in a multitude of ways. These definitions were related only to economic performance within capitalist society and they failed to explain why and how certain sections of society across multiple generations experience poor health, poor housing and poor education. For Abel-Smith and Townsend (1965), poverty ought to be considered as a relative concept, referring to a variety of conditions involving differences in home, environment, material possessions and educational and occupational resources as well as in financial resources. This capturing of the multiple and dynamic dimensions of poverty and deprivation underpinned the emergence, in the 1980s and 1990s, of the concept of 'social exclusion' (Butler and Watt, 2007; Milbourne, 2002a; Seddon, 2006), described by the European Commission as 'the multiple and changing factors resulting

in people being excluded from the normal exchanges, practices and rights of modern society' (Percy-Smith, 2000b, p. 3).

According to Roosa et al.'s (2005) analysis, it seemed to many that it would be helpful to expand the aspects of individuals' experiences of poverty that can be measured; for example, whereas measures of relative poverty assume differences in societal participation because of economic deprivation, social exclusion directly assesses behavioural and circumstantial indicators of societal participation (Roosa et al., 2005). Smith (2005) describes eight facets of social exclusion: from gaining a livelihood; exclusion from social services, welfare and security networks; exclusion from consumer culture; exclusion from political choice; exclusion from bases of popular organisation and solidarity; exclusion from understanding what is happening to society and themselves; exclusion from shelter; exclusion from personal interaction. Smith (2005) argues that these different aspects co-exist and interact dynamically with each other and in their impact on young people's lives. Where multiple disadvantage occurs, the impact can also be multiplied.

The concept of social exclusion has been criticised as not offering much in terms of precise conceptualisation (Barnes, 2005). Its breadth and flexibility has enabled policy makers and academics across political divisions to embrace it enthusiastically while annexing it to support their own political and philosophical positions (Barnes, 2005). Many scholars have argued that, within the context of hegemonic neoliberalism, the concept of social exclusion has been distorted from its social progressive origins (Butler and Watt, 2007; Lupton, 2003; Milbourne, 2002a; Seddon, 2006). Instead, as Gough et al. (2006) assert, social policies have evaded the whole question of poverty or focussing on addressing the symptoms rather than its causes, and/or blaming the poor for their own predicament.

Levitas (2005) suggests that the labelling of sections of society as 'excluded' is a deliberate action by more powerful interests to misrepresent the existence of structural inequalities in the global economic system which

disproportionately affect poor people and which require major systemic adjustments, including reducing the gap between rich and poor, to be remedied. Convincing arguments have been made that social exclusion accepts the main thrust of neoliberalism but seeks to 'make it softer through soft, spatially dispersed and differentiated forms of intervention' (Gough et al., 2006, p. 3). The behaviours of certain individuals and communities are blamed for social dysfunction, which correctly should be related to the failures of global capitalism, including the economic inequalities which have resulted from that (Gough et al., 2006). Young people in poor communities are pathologised as an antisocial 'underclass' with broadly homogeneous experiences (Alexander, 2000; Craine and MacDonald, 1997) deemed to be 'anti-social', including problematic drug use, particularly of 'poverty drugs' such as heroin and crack cocaine (MacDonald and Marsh, 2002). Gough et al. (2006) make a compelling case that neoliberal reforms mark a shift from social to private responsibility for overcoming poverty. They argue (Gough et al., 2006, p. 105) that poverty increases,

...in incomes, in service availability and service outcomes. People's life chances from cradle to grave are made more directly dependent on labour markets, and the support they can obtain from their family; competition on labour markets and household conflicts are thereby exacerbated. The reforms increase inequalities both between the poor and the better off and among different social groups within the poor.

### **Discourses of social exclusion**

Watt and Jacobs (2000) argue that discourse is strategic; it is how groups exercise power. Levitas (2005) undertook a wide-ranging and influential review of the various discourses of social exclusion. She draws attention to dominant discourses that consider as 'socially excluded' disadvantaged groups who fail to conform to 'mainstream' norms, most importantly by engagement in paid employment (Levitas, 2005). In addition to being

socially and economically marginalised and stigmatised, these people are often derided as a 'moral underclass', with responsibility for their 'failings' being laid at their own feet, rather than the reasons for their predicament being recognised as an inevitable consequence of globalisation and free market economics (as also noted by Barry, 2005b; Floyd, 1996; Gough et al., 2006).

The emphasis that the notion of 'social exclusion' (Levitas, 2005; Smith, 2005) places on framing the human experience as dynamic, complex and consistently and profoundly social fits with Elias' philosophical perspective (Elias, 1983, 1978). However, the idea that a person's experience can be 'inside' or 'outside' society conflicts with Elias' contention that the individual is part of society, with neither being comprehensible save in relation to the other (Elias, 1983). Some researchers (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005) also question the applicability of the term 'social exclusion' in contexts where young people, though marginalised from many sources of structural power, feel very involved in their local communities.

Levitas (2005) divides the dominant discourses of social exclusion into three main categories, as follows:

RED, the Redistributionist Exclusion Discourse, emphasises poverty as a prime cause of social exclusion. In addressing social, political and cultural, as well as economic citizenship as the obverse of exclusion, it implies that radically reducing inequalities and redistribution of resources and power must be the focus of policy to address social exclusion (Levitas, 2005).

SID, the Social Integrationist Discourse, takes a narrow view of social exclusion, its causes and impacts, referring only to participation in paid work. Thus, it ignores inequalities between paid workers and obscures gender and class inequalities in the labour market. It also ignores unpaid work in society and its gendered distribution, mostly carried out by women. It also has a strong moral

underpinning, whereby non-participation in paid work is deemed to be illegitimate (Levitas, 2005).

MUD, the Moral Underclass Discourse, follows in the medieval and Victorian traditions of considering some poor to be 'deserving', others 'undeserving'. It presents the underclass or socially excluded as somehow culturally distinct from the 'mainstream'. Unlike RED, it focusses on blaming poor people for their plight rather than considering the structural inequalities in the whole of society. State correcting mechanisms for the latter, such as welfare benefits, are seen to discourage self-reliance and independence for recipients. Moral judgements within the MUD discourse have tended to focus on stereotypes about idle, criminal young men and single mothers (Levitas, 2005, pp. 20–21). Other writers (MacDonald, 1997; Watt, 2006) note that the MUD discourse has promoted the idea that, through their own chosen patterns of cultural behaviour, sections of the UK population, especially young people in poor neighbourhoods, have been stereotyped as persistently reliant on state benefits, almost permanently confined to living in poorer conditions and neighbourhoods and stigmatised in media and policy discussion.

## **RED**

Wilkinson and Pickett (2009, 2007) highlight the links between income inequality and a whole range of health and social problems and Lupton (2003) has specifically drawn attention to the links between economic hardship and adverse social and psychological outcomes. However, policy makers have failed to propose any concrete measures to reduce the gap between rich and poor in any major way (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009, 2007). On the contrary, (Lupton, 2003; Watt and Jacobs, 2000), not only are pockets of deprivation emerging in particular geographical locations; across the whole of the UK inequality has widened, driven in large part by economic changes, affecting the size and composition of neighbourhoods.

## **SID**

SID views inclusion essentially as being related to inclusion in the capitalist labour market. Several writers have suggested that the SID interpretation has undermined the original meaning and intention of the concept (Fergusson, 2002; Mannion, 2005). As well as criticising the idea that everyone's priority should be to have economic prosperity (Chanan, 2000), some academics have argued that the interpretation of social exclusion within the SID framework and the failure to recognise and act to reduce inequality means that society is now presented as having a higher standard of living, with those who do not experience this being represented as 'outside' a homogeneous mainstream society (Levitas, 2005; Watt and Jacobs, 2000). To see integration as solely effected by paid work is also to ignore the fact that much social labour takes place outside the market, most notably as unpaid work by women. Levitas (1996) also argues that it ignores other processes of, for example, racial exclusion, which operate in a broader arena.

## **MUD**

Some have suggested that, in the late twentieth century, the American New Right's political agenda included pathologising and identifying certain sections of society as immoral so as actively to exclude them from the mainstream, while reinforcing conformism within the latter (Baldwin et al., 1997; Blackman, 1997; Bullen and Kenway, 2004). As what MacDonald (1997, p.1) terms the "underclass' accusation' has emerged, it has had a significant influence on contemporary discourse and policy. The modern 'underclass', located at the bottom of the class structure over time, has been deemed to have become structurally separate and culturally distinct from the regularly employed working-class and from society in general, through processes of social and economic change (particularly de-industrialisation. Through patterns of cultural behaviour, they are now persistently reliant on state benefits and almost permanently confined to living in poorer conditions and neighbourhoods (MacDonald, 1997).



Scholars have debated whether an underclass exists, or is emerging, in the UK (Roberts, 1997). Whatever the case, the labelling of one class in this way by a more privileged class would be likely to disadvantage the poorest and weakest members of society (Roberts, 1997). Although the association has most often been with benefit dependents and youth more generally, the stereotypical 'suspects' being the 'irresponsible, welfare-draining single mother' and the 'feckless young man' (MacDonald, 1997, p.19). In public discourse, academics (Hollingworth and Williams, 2009) have noted that poor young people have often been fixed in place by their local regional accents and their lack of mobility and labelled as 'chavs' (Jones, 2012) with denigrated characteristics which are aesthetic, performative and moral (Hollingworth and Williams, 2009). It is likely that such labelling would not only affect certain classes but other groups, including women, disabled people, black and minority ethnic communities, gay men and lesbians would also suffer disproportionately (Mac An Ghaill, 1994; Shildrick et al., 2009; Williams and Roseneil, 2004). Young 'Piltoners' might fall into several of these categories.

### **The Centre for Social Justice**

SID and MUD discourses (Levitas, 2005) dominate the pronouncements of the influential Centre for Social Justice (CSJ). The CSJ published 'Breakthrough Britain' (Centre for Social Justice, 2007) and subsequently claimed, that this paper had 'fundamentally altered the British political landscape' (Centre for Social Justice, 2007, p. 17), reinvigorating a 'tired national debate about tackling poverty' (Centre for Social Justice, 2007, p. 17). If this is accurate, the impact would be felt by poor, young people in Pilton. However, I would suggest that the CSJ's policies should be regarded as evolutionary, rather than revolutionary. When they argue that work is the best way out of poverty for most people, they are voicing a well-established political view. Their attack in publications such as 'Breakthrough Britain' (Centre for Social Justice, 2007) on the institutions established as part of the post-1945 welfare state, asserting that they have failed and encouraged dependency and inhibited self-reliance is also a

development of ideas that had been floating around for many years. What might accurately be considered revolutionary is the direct impact on government policy of radical welfare reform proposals; the Coalition government, in power since 2010, enthusiastically picked up the CSJ's proposals to reform and limit access to welfare benefits for huge swathes of people. At the same time, the CSJ has sought to divert attention away from income inequality with arguments such as that, by defining households as living in poverty if they fall below a certain income level, typically taken at sixty per cent of national median income, government has acted in an 'arbitrary' fashion and 'offered no explanation about the root causes of poverty' (Centre for Social Justice, 2016). By using the welfare system to move them above the 'poverty line', the CSJ argues that policy has 'entrenched dependency on the state and created static low income areas, from which it is very difficult for people to progress' (Centre for Social Justice, 2016).

Instead of focussing on removing oppressive and exploitative social relations that entrench certain communities and groups in long term poverty (Gough et al., 2006), the CSJ asserts that there are five 'pathways to poverty' all deemed to be inter-connected, with many of those 'trapped in poverty', experiencing more than one of these problems (Centre for Social Justice (2015a). As well as this, the CSJ believes that there are 'core protective factors' which make poverty less likely. It proposes that, fundamentally, individuals and their families are largely responsible for making choices which lead them into or out of poverty and the state needs to reorganise itself so that it supports individual actions, rather than encouraging dependency and sloth. Table 2.1 lays out what the CSJ regards as the 'pathways to poverty' and the 'core protective factors'.

<b>CSJ ‘Pathways to poverty’</b>	<b>CSJ ‘Core protective factors’</b>
Family breakdown	Strong and stable families
Educational failure	Inspiring education
Economic dependency and worklessness	Welfare system that rewards work, not benefits
Addiction to drugs and alcohol	Effective drug and alcohol prevention, enforcement and treatment;
Severe personal debt.	Efforts to prevent unmanageable levels of personal debt.

**Table 2.1: ‘Pathways to poverty’ and ‘Core protective factors’ (Adapted from Centre for Social Justice, 2016).**

The emergence of commonplace discourses that stigmatise individuals and families in places like Pilton, blaming people’s perceived moral failings for their personal failure to thrive in a highly unequal labour market has been noted by many writers (Levitas, 2005; Shildrick et al., 2012). An example of this is found in the CSJ’s unfounded claims that there are sections of society which have experienced ‘intergenerational cultures of worklessness’. This idea has gained wide support as an accepted fact by many in the public sphere. It is asserted that,

people are unemployed because of their values, attitudes and behaviours rather than because of a shortage of jobs...values, behaviours and attitudes are transmitted in families, from unemployed parents to their children who, in turn, pass on anti-employment and pro-welfare dependency attitudes to their own children. Over time, these cultures of worklessness become entrenched and are said to explain the persistent, concentrated worklessness that can be found in some British towns and cities (Shildrick et al., 2012, p. 5).

Shildrick et al. (2012) explain that social statistics suggesting that the proportion of workless households with two generations who have never worked is less than 0.5 per cent and that while no other studies have explicitly sought to measure or research families where 'three generations have never worked' (Shildrick et al., 2012, p.1), if such families did exist, then logically they would form an 'even more miniscule fraction of workless families' (Shildrick et al., 2012, p. 3). From their front-line research in Teesside and Glasgow, Shildrick et al., 2012) found no evidence of persistent unemployment through generations; rather, they concluded that contemporary worklessness is typified by 'a pattern of churning between low-paid jobs and unemployment' (Shildrick et al., 2012, p. 6), which sometimes affects different generations. While they share with the CSJ the identification of problems such as poor schooling and educational underachievement, problematic drug and alcohol use, domestic violence, and family and housing instability as contributing to 'extensive worklessness', Shildrick et al. (2012, p. 18) argue that the reasons young people have difficulty making transitions into the labour market are more due to macro-economic challenges and high rates of local unemployment than to moral failings within poor families.

In promoting the 'culture of worklessness' discourse, the CSJ distorts and invents evidence. It defines (Centre for Social Justice, 2013, p. 45) the concept as,

Intergenerational worklessness means that one person from two or more generations of the same family are not in work.

This is not how the term is generally used. However, it enables the CSJ to give the impression that the more accepted definition, as laid out by Shildrick et al. (2012) is evidenced by reports that it cites from the Department of Education and the Prince's Trust that indicate that young people in 'workless households' are more likely than others to end up in a context of NEET and to struggle to find work (Centre for Social Justice, 2013). The CSJ then draws on a survey which indicates that 96% of their

own voluntary sector Alliance 'told us that they come across intergenerational worklessness' (Centre for Social Justice, 2013, p. 46), indeed that it 'is common in some parts of the country and can involve two, three or even four generations of the same family' (Centre for Social Justice, 2013, p. 46). This reinforces the perception of the validity of their assertions. The 'underclass' thesis is underscored by comments such as the following from Gracia McGrath, a voluntary sector Chief Executive:

Most of us can remember the answer we gave to the constantly asked question of what we wanted to be when we grew up. Whether we achieved those things or not is not relevant – we had ideas about our future, we had aspirations. Most of us knew people who worked and could make decisions based on what we wanted to be, based on some knowledge. For many of our kids, they have no answer to this question, they simply don't understand the question or they have a non-specific ambition, 'I want to be famous' or, more troubling, 'I want to be the boss of a gang', as one of our children told us (Centre for Social Justice, 2013, p. 46).

### **Social exclusion and stigmatised places and people**

Social exclusion is usually associated with particular poor and stigmatised neighbourhoods. MacDonald and Marsh (2005) have described how neo-liberal thinkers such as Charles Murray divert attention away from structural inequalities to blaming what they regard as failures of white working class communities such as Pilton on the moral failings of the people who reside there. They are deemed to have developed patterns of cultural behaviour which mean that they are now persistently reliant on state benefits and almost permanently confined to living in poorer conditions and neighbourhoods (MacDonald, 1997, pp. 3–4). The dynamic processes of exclusion can relate to the impact of physical alienation, the negative perceptions of people there by outsiders or the nature of social interaction that happens in places like Pilton. The physical condition of a neighbourhood, how it is organised and its formal and informal

communication networks have been deemed to be important in demonstrating how well a community is functioning (Elliott et al., 2006; Newburn et al., 2005). As well as needing to experience pleasant public spaces and decent amenities to feel at home and not alone, it has been argued (Power, 2007) that the social contact that comes from local services provides the life-blood of communities. The converse is also the case; for example, denying people access to reasonable quality social housing marginalises them, removing their contact with services such as health and education, and moving them into insecure, possibly unsuitable or dangerous housing.

Chapter Nine discusses how the neighbourhood of Pilton and its inhabitants have been affected by stigma over many decades. As in other settings studying the experiences of marginalised youth (for example, MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; Wacquant, 2008), stigma affects the construction of individual and collective identities and relationships. It influences self-image and relationships between the 'stigmatised' and what Goffman (1963), in a book which remains influential, calls 'normals'<sup>1</sup> impacting on young people's day to day lives in their neighbourhood and their relationships to other parts of the city. Stigmatised as individuals and as a neighbourhood, people feel ambivalent about their communities (Lupton, 2003; Watt, 2006), with a strong sense of loyalty and belonging, mingled with an acceptance of the 'disgraceful' identity allocated to them, as noted elsewhere (Wacquant, 2008). In their 1965 study of Winston Parva, Elias and Scotson (1994) discuss stigma, suggesting that within communities one group can effectively stigmatise another so that the social slur enters the self-image of the stigmatised group and thus weakens and disarms them. The impact on the stigmatised groups is that they view themselves and are viewed by others, based on the 'minority of the worst'. According to Goffman (1963), stigma also creates descriptions of the stigmatised that they and others recognise. These depictions impact

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<sup>1</sup> This book was written in 1963 and there are many instances of terms being used which have to be comprehended within their historical context. My understanding of how these terms relate to our current discussion are that the 'normals' are representatives of 'mainstream' society who, consciously and unconsciously, treat people in Pilton and similar places as socially inferior.

on the social configurations which they inhabit as well as others beyond their usual circles. Because they feel 'disgraced', they may be unadventurous about leaving familiar surroundings. Others will denigrate them, both because of their disgrace and the risk that they might be similarly labelled (Goffman, 1963). Goffman (1963) argues that people who are themselves affected by stigma can often stigmatise others whom they regard as somehow more 'disgraceful' than themselves. Thus, stigma exemplifies what Elias and Scotson refer to as a playing out of the 'social dances' (Elias and Scotson, 1994) of human experience.

Referring to the area in Bristol where he carried out his research on community, Brent (2009) writes that the press never say anything good about Southmead and that, when the area is discussed, it is always as a place where there are problems to be rectified. Watt (2006) has discussed how council housing has become the tenure of last resort and how council tenants are frequently stigmatised in mass media and policy discourse. Similarly, West Pilton was included in a study (Hastings, 2004) which asserted that stigma is an integral and enduring part of the complex of problems that characterise what she called 'deprived' or 'declining' neighbourhoods. Hastings (2004) suggests that there are three discourses related to stigmatised estates: 'pathological', due to the spatial concentration of an 'underclass'; 'structural', blaming socio-spatial inequalities and the interaction between these and economic change; the third discourse is what she calls the 'area-effects' thesis which includes external aspects of neighbourhoods such as, for example, isolated location or poor quality public services and internal aspects such as a culture of low self-esteem or high proportion of lone parents (Hastings, 2004, p. 242)). Hastings believes that the reasons why stigma is associated with particular neighbourhoods has not been satisfactorily explored. Instead, pathological arguments come to the fore and there emerge what she calls 'common sense' beliefs about the relationship between the social pathologies of residents and the degree of stigma they experience. Hastings (2004) also argues that, in turn, residents themselves pathologise the behaviours of others as the reason for stigma which affects

them, and she suggests that these processes of labelling others as aberrant are transferred across generations.

As evidence of how marginalising forces have become embedded in the social structure, Cooper (2009) describes the potential for 'othering' excluded communities (Cooper, 2009). Gough et al. (2006) discuss cultural capital which comprises characteristics such as accent, physical demeanour, social behaviours, cultural tastes and attitudes to life and work. They argue that, whereas the higher classes go to great lengths to give their children the right cultural capital, working class cultural capital is specific to particular neighbourhoods and recognised and validated only in those spaces. They also argue that the class gap in cultural capital is not narrowing and that everyday behaviours therefore still, perhaps increasingly, exclude the poor. Roberts (2005b, p. 129) has suggested that this has led to a deliberate stigmatising of certain groups of working class young people by the middle classes who, for example, 'do their best to ensure that their children do not attend 'sink schools' where they are likely to be contaminated by the wrong crowds'. However, despite the continuation of stigmatised attitudes, it is asserted by some (Gough et al., 2006) that the poor continue to have some of the strongest community networks. There is certainly strong evidence of this in Pilton.

### **Social inclusion/exclusion and resilience**

Scholars broadly agree that resilience refers to:

a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity. As a dynamic and multifaceted phenomenon, the term 'resilience' derives from Latin roots meaning, to jump (or bounce) back (Luthar et al., 2000b, p.543).

Small and Memmo (2004, p. 9) argue that 'building resiliency among youth is a worthy strategy, especially for those who live in dangerous environments that are not easily changed'. The prominence of the



concepts of both 'social exclusion' and 'resilience' in UK policy discussions highlights the UK's dilemma in being influenced by often conflicting US and European traditions. The concepts have emerged from different theoretical contexts and therefore have markedly different emphases.

It has been argued (Fergusson, 2002) that the roots of the concept of 'social exclusion' lie in the more radical political philosophies of the European (and particularly the French) tradition. When the concept of social exclusion emerged in France in the 1980s its original intention was to encourage inclusion rather than to highlight exclusion, drawing attention to a philosophical belief that society and individuals flourish when there is a strong commitment to social rights, to social citizenship, to social solidarity, mutuality and the collectivisation of risk (Fergusson, 2002). Within this framework, social bonds, social cohesion, and deeply networked social relations are seen as vital to an inclusive, integrated and socially equitable society and the socially excluded are affected by processes which militate against this.

'Resilience' on the other hand has emerged from US psychoanalytical tradition (Luthar et al., 2000b). Whereas scholarly debate about youth transitions and social exclusion often focusses around whether structure or agency are more influential, to date the resilience literature is overwhelmingly dominated by concerns about how to understand and influence individual behaviours, reducing risk factors for individuals and usually ignoring structural influences (Howard et al., 1999). Bacon et al. (2010) note that, although resilience' is an increasingly dominant policy response predicated to protect against social exclusion, the two concepts are rarely examined together in the literature.

Resilience has been deemed to be a useful concept (Schoon and Bynner, 2003) in its emphasis on positive achievements rather than the deficits that others perceive in socially disadvantaged young people. As applied to child and youth policy contexts, 'resilience' was originally voiced to provide an asset-based focus, stressing how, despite facing 'significant threat or

severe adversity' (Luthar et al., 2000b, p. 543) 'resilient' individuals can 'bounce back' and thrive. For sociologists, the theory of resilience can present substantial challenges. The policy emphasis on resilience has rightly been challenged by writers such as Wilkinson and Pickett (2006, p.2):

Policies to increase resilience to the health effects of unemployment are no substitute for more jobs; nor is increasing resilience to the life-long effects of child poverty a substitute for good family support.

The labelling of individuals' character traits and behaviours as 'resilient' if they succeed in relation to normative expectations can highlight, in others' views, deficits rather than assets. At the same time as responsibility is placed with the individual for his/her own 'success' or 'failure', changing the structural inequalities that exist as an integral component of capitalism (Gough et al., 2006; Levitas, 2005), and that can have the greatest impact on outcomes for individuals, is ignored.

The term 'resilience' is often used in imprecise ways, for example as a synonym for 'well-being' or 'happiness' (Bacon et al., 2010), 'coping' (MacDonald and Shildrick, 2010) or 'recovery' in the face of trauma such as abuse or injury (Smith et al., 2007). Most often, the term is used to signify success in achieving a 'rebounding' response, strengthened and more resourceful to significant adversity, misfortune, trauma, or other crises, risk or other negative experiences (Orthner et al., 2002; Seccombe, 2002). Just as most life crises involve a complex set of changing conditions with a past history and a future course, the ability to be resilient is deemed to require multidimensional development and adaptation over time (Walsh, 1998).

From a psychosocial perspective it is argued (Small and Memmo, 2004) that resilience results from the interaction between at least four distinct processes: the successful operation of protective processes, the operation of certain exceptional personal characteristics (for example, intelligence or

sociability), the successful recovery from a stressful situation or crisis event or through the process of 'steeling', whereby individuals overcome challenging experiences that strengthen their capacity to withstand subsequent stressful situation. There is also broad consensus in the literature that resilience results from a combination of personality traits with which some children are born and others learn; 'nature' versus 'nurture' (Orthner et al., 2002). Characteristic traits of resilience include positive communication, problem solving and conflict management, companionship, cohesion around values and social support (Orthner et al., 2002). However, there has to be some social dimension to the concept of resilience. Despite the emphasis on the individual, a resilient person is not deemed to be totally self-sufficient or invulnerable. Rather, he or she is able to develop openness and relations with others which can support successful outcomes. Resilient youth are deemed to exhibit characteristics of determination, meaning and purpose in life, caring for self and receiving help from others (Williams et al., 2001). Their qualities are also represented as including social competence, problem solving skills, autonomy and a sense of purpose and a future (Howard et al., 1999).

### **Resilience and young people**

For young people, the theory of resilience is problematic in the way that it prioritises external and normative judgements about individuals' characteristics and behaviours and the adversities that they are deemed to have overcome (or not) over individuals' own assessments. Evidence of resilience is cited (Schoon and Bynner, 2003, p. 22) as 'positive adaptation...in terms of manifested competence, or success, in achieving the appropriate developmental task at different stages in life'. Measures of young people's general 'competence' might include, for instance, assessments of academic attainment and behavioural adjustment (Schoon and Bynner, 2003). Ungar (2005) suggests that young people's experiences are often different from researchers' observations and conclusions. He writes that resilience is very value-laden, tied to normative judgements related to particular outcomes. He describes how young

people's rebellion against social convention is often judged to provide evidence that they are not resilient, effectively because they do not behave as the mainstream authorities would wish. Within this framework, illicit drug use or carrying a knife, for example, would almost always be judged to demonstrate lack of resilience when another perspective might be to view such 'delinquent' acts as ways of learning pro-social behaviour by experimentation (Parkes and Conolly, 2011a). It is also the case that young people vary markedly in adverse circumstances (Wyman et al., 1999), and different factors contribute to their assessment of risk and protective factors (Thompson et al., 2003). A homogenised identification of certain groups and individuals as being 'at risk' can be inaccurate and can lead to stigmatisation (Catterall, 2004). It can also obscure how issues such as gender, race, class and sexuality issues all affect the judgements that young people make on a daily basis (Oswald, 2002).

Resilience theory has been considered by some (Catalano et al., 2004) primarily as a method of controlling young people's behaviour and especially applicable to specific groups of young people – for example, young people like those included in this study in Pilton – who are deemed to be resilient if they succeed in 'overcoming predictions of failure' (Catterall, 2004, p. 304). The theory of resilience assumes that 'we' know what typifies a 'normal' or an 'abnormal' response to what 'we' consider to be extreme events. Our morality is also gendered, and our genders are actively constructed, not simply received (McDowell, 2003). As an illustration of this, scholars (Griffin, 1997b; McDowell, 2003) have noted that, when young women exhibit what is considered to be 'anti-social' behaviours it can be regarded as an individual act of deviancy whereas the same behaviour by young men is regarded as more 'normal', 'a frequent attribute of 'adolescent masculinity' (Mac An Ghaill, 1994, p. 121).

From a study carried out with five young women in the USA, Williams et al. (2001) concluded that three of the young women possessed 'resiliency' after traumatic experiences characterised by 'compassion, optimism, and gratitude' (Williams et al., 2001, p. 233), compared to the other two who

'continued to submerge themselves in lifestyles filled with risks' (Williams et al., 2001, p. 233). However, the assessment and labelling of these young people is problematic for a range of reasons. The authors admit (Williams et al., 2001, p. 237) that there was 'no way of knowing whether the participants who were classified as more resilient in fact continued along their positive life trajectories'. Their labelling was based on one-off interviews. They also suggest that their judgement about the two 'less resilient participants' seems to have been validated by their subsequently learning that they were apparently carrying on with 'more negative life trajectories', including being involved in drug use and sexual behaviours, on which the authors frown.

### **Neoliberalism and resilience**

Smith (2005) argues that globalisation and the influence of neoliberalism has led to a public belief that, with the breakdown of traditional institutions based on family, community and social class, individuals now have to navigate society for themselves. With the emergence of the concept of resilience it has been asserted that policy often relies on an overwhelming (and imbalanced) emphasis on individual agency to act, allowing structural inequalities that disadvantage particular groups of young people to be maintained (Bacon et al., 2010; Howard et al., 1999; Small and Memmo, 2004). The popularity of the concept of resilience for policy makers fits with the neoliberal emphasis on individual agency and responsibility to act to overcome difficult social circumstances (Bacon et al., 2010; Howard et al., 1999; Small and Memmo, 2004). The resilience discourse can ignore structural disadvantages, instead placing the emphasis on changing some groups of families and young people who are personally deficient (Bacon et al., 2010; Ungar, 2005; Walsh, 1998). Thus, as Stephen and Squires have put it (2004, p. 352),

'Dangerous' young people and families, through the moralistic rhetoric of 'responsibilisation'...become firmly subject to that great 'epistemological fallacy' of late modernity in that they are

encouraged to formulate individual solutions for problems that remain, largely, of a structural nature.

Walsh (1998) asserts that, contrary to the intention that resilience should emphasise and encourage positive characteristics, policy makers have tended to see some children or families as being personally deficient, similar to the MUD discourse of social exclusion (Levitas, 2005). Ungar (2005) asserts that, at its worst, the theory of resilience has been appropriated by neo-conservatives to responsibilise individuals, regardless of their circumstances and denying very real structural constraints which mean that not only can not all children do equally well; in fact, our society is not structured to achieve that. Findings from an empirical qualitative study in Newhaven, Sussex (Harrison, 2013, p.97) support the position that the shift in policy emphasis to 'resilience' is problematic for several reasons:

that it supports normative value judgements; that it may overemphasize the ability of people to 'bounce back' and undervalue the hidden costs of resilience, especially those with gendered dimensions; and that it may be associated with policy prescriptions that shift responsibility for dealing with crisis away from the public sphere.

### **Towards a more 'social' theory of resilience?**

Elias (1978, p. 29) affirms that sociology should concern itself with the exploration of the 'dynamics of social interweavings' rather than focusing on the individual, as is the tendency with many interventions designed to build resilience. Many scholars (Roosa, 2000; Seccombe, 2002; Silliman, 2004; Smith and Carlson, 1997; Walsh, 1998) stress the importance of the interaction between young people's own attributes, characteristics of their families and aspects of the wider social environment. Some of the literature about resilience concerns itself with, for example, the

relationships which a young person develops with parents or carers (Roosa, 2000; Silliman, 2004; Smith and Carlson, 1997; Walsh, 1998). Processes of support to build resilience have also been found beyond the 'traditional' two-parent family structure, including a variety of formal and informal kinship arrangements (Walsh, 2002). The significance of relationships with other caring adults and mentors, such as coaches and teachers (Kim-Cohen et al., 2004; Walsh, 2002; Wyman et al., 1999) is also stressed.

Edwards (2007) argues that efforts to enhance resilience at an individual level need to be accompanied by parallel attempts at configuring social practices of support across settings. She concludes that the prevention of social exclusion requires working to strengthen individuals as well as working on aspects of environments that exclude (Edwards, 2007) and other writers (Hill et al., 2007; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009, 2007) also emphasise the need specifically to address socio-economic inequalities.

### **Social capital theory**

Social capital for Bourdieu (cited in Barnes, 2005, p. 87) refers to,

contacts and group memberships which, through the accumulation of exchanges, obligations and shared identities, provide actual or potential support and access to valued resources.

Social capital pays attention to the networks which Elias (1983) stresses should be the primary foci of sociology. Social capital is a social resource that can give access to opportunities, education, the labour market and can lead to collective efficacy. It is based (Boeck, 2009) on the premise that people engage with each other through a variety of associations, forming many types of networks. Social capital encapsulates the differences in these types of networks. The concept of social capital is more immediately grounded than resilience in the idea of the importance of relationships and networks. In Vietnam, the ability of groups or

communities to cope with external stresses and disturbances as a result of social, political and environmental change was explored in a study of the development of community or social resilience (Adger, 2000). Adger (2000) calls this 'social resilience', existing at community level and related to the social capital of societies and communities. However, this is one of the rare mentions of social capital in the resilience literature.

A communitarian version of social capital theory would emphasise social integration as a way of reducing the risk of social exclusion of disadvantaged young people. However, with young people who are working to establish adult identities, some studies have suggested that bonding social capital (Gewirtz et al., 2005) has a greater in-group trajectory than bridging social capital which facilitates personal connectedness beyond the local community. Thus, for example, Holligan and Deuchar (2009) conclude from their research in Glasgow that certain groups as diverse as gangs and football-team supporters have bonding social capital (Gewirtz et al., 2005), but that this can lead to territoriality, with group members regarding outsiders with suspicion and hostility. MacDonald and Marsh (2005) also found that networks of young mothers gave and achieved bonding social capital (Gewirtz et al., 2005), support within their own local environments, but that they could also restrict bridging social capital, for example, by discouraging others from accessing education opportunities.

Although social capital theory focusses usefully on social networks and interactions, like resilience, some have argued that it can be very normative within a neoliberal context, side-lining the economic, material and structural effects or determinations in enabling it to be gained (Garmarnikov and Green, 2000). Bourdieu (cited in Garmarnikov and Green, 2000) argues that social capital is intrinsically unequal as lower class networks are always going to be less able than middle class networks to produce socially and economically successful outcomes. It is argued that an outcome from this can include a deepening of political complacency about economic and political regeneration (Garmarnikov and



Green, 2000). It has also been asserted (Furstenberg Jr. and Hughes, 1995) that with a neoliberal emphasis on competition, an aggressive form of social capital might actually increase class differences with, for example, parents using their competitive advantages to gain access to the best schools for their children.

As argued earlier, there has been little emphasis on understanding how young disadvantaged people construct their realities, assessing what social capital they have within their own self-defined contexts and engaging them as contributors to others' social capital. Rather, some forms of social relationships and institutions, such as two-parent families, are encouraged while others, such as criminal networks, are not (Garmarnikov and Green, 2000). With this conformist view of social capital, anything which challenges the system is to be resisted, stigmatised and excluded. Garmarnikov and Green (2000, p. 109) describe this as 'authoritarian populism, drawing on ideas of an apparently benign communitarianism'.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter has discussed the literature which provides the academic context for my study in Pilton. Noting that empirical investigations to explore the subjective experiences of young people, their dynamic figurations and 'social dances' (Elias, 1983, p. 262), are under-represented, I have developed this study in such a way that I have been able to observe, record and analyse at first hand young people's experiences, rather than relying on secondary sources that may be inaccurate and which also are often couched within discourse of 'youth as a problem'.

My discussion of the individualism that has dominated contemporary political discourse within the neoliberal political project has contrasted this with Elias' (1978) emphasis on the social, interconnected nature of human experience. The latter perspective provides a theoretical framework for all of my discussion in this thesis. The importance of the social networks that

young people inhabit within Pilton are discussed, as are the broader structural features of contemporary society that disadvantage them, importantly in relation to engagement in the labour market. I have discussed the criticisms by Levitas (2005) and others (for example, Gough et al., 2006; Harvey, 2004) of the emphasis on engagement in the paid employment market as a marker of 'inclusion'. My exploration in subsequent chapters of social networks emphasises that young people in Pilton are part of a society that faces challenges, yet is rich and diverse. My discussion of leisure transitions in particular illustrates that.

In this chapter, I have argued that where there has been investigation of young people's perspectives, the main approaches have taken place under two broad categories, that of cultural studies and youth transitions. There is more of a reliance in my study on the youth transitions approach. Transitions theory is used in my empirical investigation in Chapter Eight, where I discuss the important role that PYCP plays in many young people's lives, including the ambivalence that some feel about moving away from the centre as part of the 'growing up' process. It is noteworthy that, consciously or unconsciously, PYCP's Strategic Plan (Pilton Youth and Children's Project, 2014) recognises this uncertainty and avoids use of the transitions metaphor, instead emphasising the services the agency provides, including targeted interventions for the most troubled young people. As noted in this chapter, cultural studies and transitions frameworks sometimes overlap; for example, my discussion in Chapter Five of how young people use dress is influenced by the cultural studies approach.

Following Elias' emphasis on networks, future chapters highlight that young people in places such as Pilton manage a range of transitions to adulthood through a myriad of constantly changing social networks, with local friends and family and a broader sense of social and economic marginalisation having very strong influences. Investigation of this dynamism and diversity has been neglected. I have noted that, with a few exceptions (see *inter alia*, MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; Shildrick et al.,

2009), even studies focussing on transitions have tended to prioritise specific discussion of the move from school into the labour market context. Even in exploring the latter, I have suggested that prominent arguments (Standing, 2014) that suggest that contemporary experiences are more uncertain and troubling than in the past may not reflect the realities in places such as Pilton, that have been disadvantaged over generations. The historical continuities of experiences of poverty and stigma are discussed specifically in Chapters Three and Nine, while in my analysis of young people's chances in the labour market context in Chapter Seven I suggest that these young people are not newly precarious; rather, if Standing's (2014) new 'precariat' theory is valid, it serves to embed the disadvantage of young people like those in this study, rather than making them newly precarious.

I have also noted that, even where theoretical concepts such as social exclusion, have emerged with the intention of providing a framework to consider and potentially reduce inequalities, their usage has often been distorted so that, instead they emphasise individual responsibility, with little reference to structural social inequalities. I have discussed and highlighted criticisms of the concept of resilience (Luthar et al., 2000b), including suggestions that its focus on the individual may serve to divert attention away from the need to reduce structural social and economic inequalities. In Chapter Eleven, I consider the theoretical basis for the reliance in Scottish youth policy on the concept of resilience and I draw conclusions that support the critique in the academic literature of the concept as problematic, especially in its individualistic emphasis.

Throughout my analysis, following Elias (1983, 1978), I emphasise that young people have personal agency but that structural factors over which they may have little control may have more impact on their outcomes than anything they can do themselves, at least within consumerist and employment contexts. This fits with a range of academic perspectives (for example, Furlong and Cartmel (1997); MacDonald and Marsh, 2005). I draw on literature that argues that social capital theory might offer a more

useful social framework for considering young people's experiences but I stress that its interpretation remains contextualised within unequal social frameworks. In my subsequent discussions, I draw on social capital theory, highlighting how young people can be supported in their daily lives by the 'bonding' social capital derived from belonging to a close-knit community while at the same time this can inhibit them from 'bridging' into other social contexts further afield, and potentially with more opportunities, at least in the economic sense.

In conclusion, this review of the literature, highlighting the usefulness of work which prioritises the perspectives of young, disadvantaged people, and their scarcity, save for a few key studies (for example, MacDonald and Marsh, 2005), supports a broader need for more locally-based studies about youth transitions, such as this. In Chapter Twelve, based on issues that I identify from my fieldwork in Pilton, I will indicate specific areas for further exploration.

### **Chapter Three: Pilton, past and present**

Elias stresses the importance of analysing the past so as to make sense of the present. Thus, in this chapter, the past and the present are considered as 'long-term figurational sequences' (Elias, 1978, p.164), and, rather than current challenges being considered as unique to this historical moment, the continuity of experiences of economic and social marginalisation is emphasised, although some of the specifics have changed. Both historical and contemporary experiences for many people in Pilton are shown to be typified by material poverty, stigma and disadvantage co-existing with strong family and friendship networks.

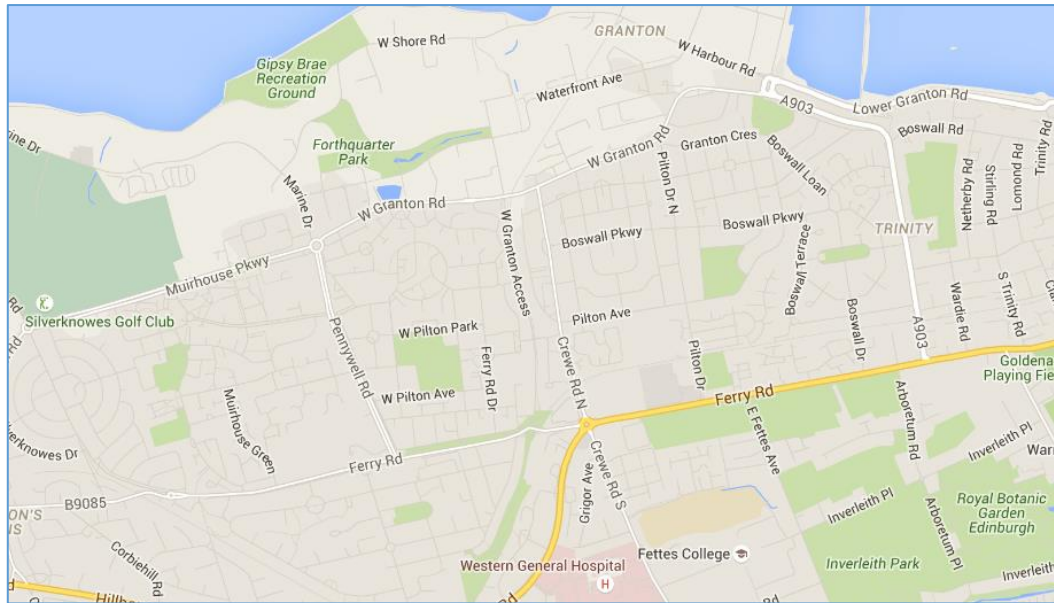
Most of the young people in this study grew up, live and socialise in Pilton. After describing the geographical location of the scheme and local planning and political arrangements, there is a discussion of the scheme's history. This includes the challenges it has faced over time, such as planning and economic challenges, social disruption and, in the 1980s, the significant impact of the emergence of local drug markets and the spread of HIV/AIDS. In the last fifteen years or so, the demographics of the area have been altered by an influx of immigrants from Eastern Europe and Pilton's social make-up is very different from the rest of the city of Edinburgh. Towards the end, I will discuss the political structures and processes that have tried to alleviate the hardships that people experience, though with limited success. My concluding remarks emphasise that, as will be shown in following chapters, there is a local community that is thriving in many ways, and individual responses to the common experience of disadvantage vary.

#### **Location**

Edinburgh is the capital and the second largest city in Scotland, with 476,626 residents (Scotland's census, 2016). Located in the south-east of Scotland, the city lies on the east coast of the nation's central belt, along

the Firth of Forth, near the North Sea. Edinburgh is well known for the Edinburgh Festival, a collection of official and independent festivals held annually over four weeks from early August. The city attracts one million overseas visitors every year, making it the second most visited UK tourist destination, after London (City of Edinburgh Council, 2010). However, Edinburgh is also a city where there are huge health, economic and social inequalities (Forth Neighbourhood Partnership, 2008a), especially in areas like West Pilton where most of the fieldwork was conducted and where PYCP is located.

West Pilton is a housing scheme on the periphery of North West Edinburgh, which was established mainly between the 1930s and 1950s. To the immediate east, lies East Pilton, another housing scheme that was built slightly earlier, and to the west, lies Muirhouse, which was built slightly later. In recent decades, West Pilton and Muirhouse have experienced considerable renovation, including demolition of much of the housing stock, and rebuilding work, which continues. The attached video from 2009 takes the viewer on a tour of Pilton and the neighbouring Royston and Muirhouse estates (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgsuhosOvMk>, Accessed 16 April 2016) in 2009. Figure 3.1 is a Google map of West Pilton. The scheme is bounded by Pennywell Road to the west, West Granton Road to the north, Crewe Road North to the east, and Ferry Road to the south. The West Granton Access Road follows the route of an old railway that closed in the 1960s. Shortly west of here, Ferry Road connects to one of the main arteries that connect the centre of the city to routes to the North and West of Scotland and to Edinburgh airport.



**Figure 3.1 Google map of West Pilton**

Figure 3.2 below, shows where West Pilton is located in the city. Although Pilton is only three miles north of the city centre, as has been noted elsewhere (Hastings, 2004), it can feel more isolated than that, possibly because it lies outside the main artery roads into the city.

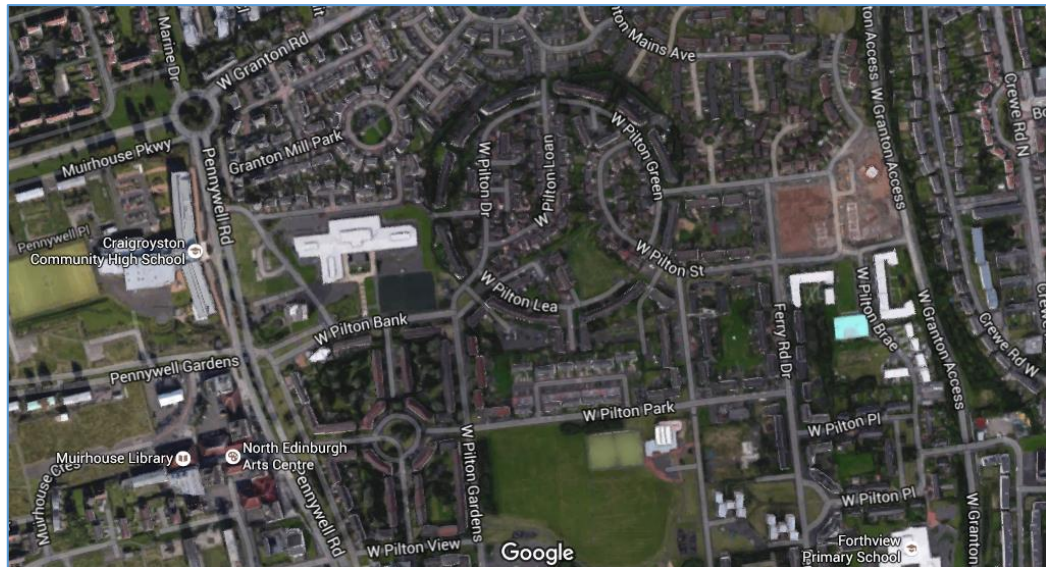


**Figure 3.2 Google map of West Pilton and Edinburgh**

Figure 3.3 is an overhead Google map looking at West Pilton. To the left/west, bordering Muirhouse, is Craigroyston Community High School. The bright green roof of PYCP is clearly visible to the right/east of the photo, located in the heart of the neighbourhood. From the Google map, one can see that in front/above the youth centre, there are areas of cleared land. During the course of the research, new housing, with a range of tenures was being built on that land. The majority of young people in this study lived near to PYCP and they spent much of their leisure time in the youth centre and the surrounding streets. They often described places that were physically nearby as though they were far away. However, their social networks sometimes extend across neighbouring areas, where these have similar demographics, such as Muirhouse, Granton and Royston, less often into more affluent neighbouring places. Hazel, a local employment adviser, had had many years of experience of living and working in the local area, and she confirmed this localism:

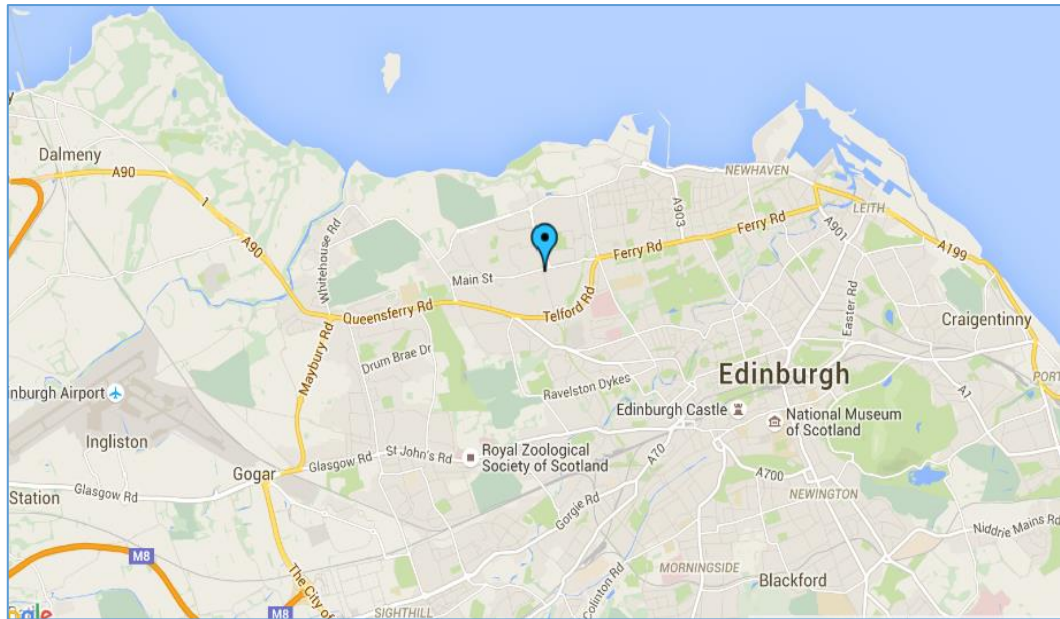
I think that the boundaries that are there, you know, people will say, 'I'm from Royston', which is very different from, 'I'm from Granton' or 'I'm from Pilton' or 'I'm from Muirhouse', you know. Where are you from? They wouldn't say 'I'm from Greater Pilton', so they're very much tied to their area and there is kinda in-fighting with young people over the boundaries and you'll get someone from Pilton who wouldn't come down to Granton or go to Muirhouse.





**Figure 3.3 Google map of West Pilton, with PYCP**

The Google map in Figure 3.4 gives an indication of the significant distance between Pilton and some of Edinburgh's main tourist attractions. The main roads form both geographical and conceptual boundaries for many young people in Pilton who feel nervous about venturing out of their immediate neighbourhood. It would also be unlikely that tourists would venture into Pilton, East or West, without a specific reason for going there, as there are no obvious tourist attractions.



**Figure 3.4 Google map showing distance between West Pilton and Edinburgh tourist attractions**

### **Historical Pilton**

**(Unless otherwise referenced, the newspaper articles and reports cited have been accessed from Pilton press cuttings. Vol.1, 1832-1994, a book of press cuttings held in the Edinburgh Room of Edinburgh Central Library, Accessed 10 January 2011.)**

The Pilton schemes, East and West, had a promising beginning. The 'Edinburgh Evening News' of 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1933, under a headline, 'This is East Pilton', described families travelling from central Edinburgh to view the new housing scheme. The article described houses that would 'enjoy the maximum of fresh air and sunshine', the curve of roads and house designs that offered 'harmony without uniformity' with different colours of slate, various designs of windows and interiors. The scheme was presented as a model suburb for housing working-class people, away from slums in the centre of Edinburgh. West Pilton was also described in early accounts ('Edinburgh Evening News', 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1944) as 'an example of vision and broad, constructive planning on the part of the Corporation to provide decent homes for a large number of the citizens'.

However, this latter account also documented how restrictions due to the onset of the Second-World War had caused building work to be suspended in 1940. According to the 'Scottish Sunday Express 12/40 (exact date not specified)', this meant that the 4,000 people who had been moved there and who had been 'accustomed to shops, trams, life and fun at their doors' now had 'no shops, no church, no cinemas, no meeting-place, no bus...nothing'. The newspaper lamented that the scheme 'has been almost forgotten and left to get along by itself'.

Building work restarted in 1944 ('Edinburgh Evening News', 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1944). Accounts from the time describe these 'apparently being hampered, money wasted, and valuable material destroyed and damaged to an alarming extent by persons who, in a spirit of malicious and senseless vindictiveness are indulging in an orgy of destruction' ('Edinburgh Evening News', 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1944). The reporter talks about visiting and finding 'deliberate destruction on a wholesale scale.' Manholes were filled with rubbish, concrete castings were smashed and woodwork had been hacked with knives and axes. He also describes a wrecked crane and concrete stairs, which had been loosened and made unsafe. He alleges that, in one block of buildings with twenty-eight windows, only twelve had been left intact and 1,132 window panes had to be replaced. He also discusses thieving and vandalism by adults and the attitudes of 'the womenfolk, who have neither pride in the place nor the ability or desire to control their children'. The article concludes:

West Pilton is a depressing sight to those who have the interests of the community at heart, and this evidence of wholesale damage provides a sobering douche to the flame of optimism burning in the minds of those with the welfare of the people at heart ('Edinburgh Evening News', 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1944).

The 'Edinburgh Evening News' of 30<sup>th</sup> October 1948 draws attention to the need for leisure facilities for young people who are reported as constituting almost half of the local community:

In the vast, sprawling dormitory of the Pilton district there are almost 8000 boys and girls. Over two-thirds of them are not attached to any youth organisation whatever. Delinquency, both actual and potential, is definitely a challenge, and with it the acute shortage of suitable club premises for keeping the youngsters happily occupied and off the streets.

The 'Evening Dispatch' of 19<sup>th</sup> October 1953, under the headline 'Pilton has a problem', raises concerns that a continuing lack of local amenities for young people would lead to 'delinquency':

It was the children and the teenagers who loitered at the corners. The hour, half past seven, was too early for bed, but the number out of doors indicated that family life on a Sunday night is not very strong. That, perhaps, is one reason why young people get into mischief.

But what was so obvious above everything else was that these young people seemed to have nothing else to do...The police say they are satisfied there are no gangs in Pilton as gangs are known in other towns. One accepts that, but there are still a lot of youths who band together and make mischief, for want of something better to do. And it is going to take a whole corps of policemen to footslog up and down the weary length of these streets.

Yes, Pilton's problem is juvenile; to guide all this restless energy of youth into the right channel.

However, there is also evidence from newspaper reports of the local community responding to challenges. For example, new groups started to challenge the stigmatising of the whole community by what they perceived to be the actions of a minority. In 'The Scotsman' in August 1946 (exact date not specified), the newly formed West Pilton Parents' Association is reported as protesting that it was 'unfair to make sweeping charges of

moral responsibility for a great deal of damage against those resident in adjacent properties.’ In the following years, there are descriptions of community organisations committed to improving local facilities, including the West Pilton Community Association, the Pilton Working Party (‘Edinburgh Evening News’, 30<sup>th</sup> October 1948), the West Pilton and District Coordinating Committee (‘Evening Dispatch’, 1<sup>st</sup> December 1949), the ‘Pilton Sporting Club’ and ‘Pennywell Boys Club’ (‘Pilton Story – Working Men’). New youth services were established and civic movements for other sections of the community, such as the Care Committee for old folk, emerged (‘Edinburgh Evening News’, 11<sup>th</sup> February 1954).

The first Pilton Festival is reported in the ‘Edinburgh Evening News’ of 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1956 and in 1957, accounts of the second festival in ‘The Scotsman’ of 14<sup>th</sup> March, 1957 stressed the purpose ‘to bring about an improvement in the standard of work being done in drama, choral singing, dancing and music’. There was a great deal of poverty, but community spirit was strong. In 1962 (‘Evening News’, 21<sup>st</sup> March 1962), it is reported that twenty-four educationists from seven Commonwealth countries visited Pilton festival to see country dancing. The 1966 festival included May Queen and Bonny Baby competitions, and it was opened by Jimmy Logan, a well-known television entertainer in Scotland (‘Edinburgh Evening News’, 13<sup>th</sup> May 1966). Reports of the thriving festival continued in newspapers throughout the decade (‘Edinburgh Evening News’, 13<sup>th</sup> May 1966; ‘Evening News and Dispatch’, 8<sup>th</sup> March 1967; ‘The Scotsman’, 7<sup>th</sup> March 1968; ‘Edinburgh Evening News’ 7<sup>th</sup> March 1968, 12<sup>th</sup> March 1968, 21<sup>st</sup> March 1968, 14<sup>th</sup> March 1969, 24<sup>th</sup> October 1969). A new Pilton Gala Day at Craigroyston school was reported in the ‘Edinburgh Evening News’ of 25<sup>th</sup> August 1971, but it was reported that in 1972 (‘Edinburgh Evening News’, 16<sup>th</sup> June 1972), ‘financial difficulties...have curtailed this year’s activities’. The gala day returned in 1973 (‘Edinburgh Evening News’, 9<sup>th</sup> March 1973), but it was cancelled two years later due to a teachers’ strike (‘Edinburgh Evening News’, 19<sup>th</sup> March 1975). The ‘Pilton Press Cuttings’ (Pilton Press Cuttings, Vol 1, 1832-1994) also contain positive reports from

subsequent years ('Edinburgh Evening News', 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1976, 24<sup>th</sup> March, 1977, 24<sup>th</sup> February 1978, 27<sup>th</sup> February 1978 and 12<sup>th</sup> March 1983).

Ex-residents of Pilton, now retired, share their (mainly fond) memories online (edinphoto, 2016), giving a sense of the community spirit that, according to many interviewees, has now been lost. The website accounts give the impression of a bygone age, of a poor neighbourhood that had a strong sense of community and a range of local amenities, some of which, for example, the cinema, 'The Embassy' no longer exist. The same website also describes 'The Shack', which was a dance hall that, according to Steven Oliver, 'burnt down in the early 1990s, if I'm correct, due to vandalism', an active scout troop, engagement with the Territorial Army, football and cricket matches, trips to pantomimes and to swimming baths, and organised community trips away to 'such exotic places as Stiffkey in Norfolk, Tonfanau in North Wales, Newquay in Cornwall and Bude' (Edward Thomson, now of Glamis Castle, Angus). There is also some mention of religious observance, which was absent from all but one of my contemporary interviews, including the recollection of Brendon Hume, now of Haxey, North Lincolnshire, of having to 'report to a police box to get my ball back, and the huge local bobby gave me a right telling off for allowing my football to be used on a Sunday!'. Bruce Johnstone, now of Haddington, East Lothian, recalls the travelling vans that toured the scheme:

'Congleton's Fish Van', 'Brown's Fish Van', 'Francis Henderson: Fruit and Veg' (a horse-drawn cart), 'Leith Provident Mobile Shop' (groceries), 'St. Cuthbert's Mobile Shop' (bread and cakes), the 'Ice Cream Van' and the 'Mobile Chip Van' ('It was quite a stretch for a 9 year old to reach up and get 'a poke of chips' for 3 old pence. Very tasty!).

Bob Sinclair, now of Queensland, Australia, fondly recalls 'the Ice Cream Barrow Man':

His barrow was a contrivance like a three wheel bicycle with a big box on the front that had two deep cans of ice cream. You could, in the early days, get a farthing cone. It was about a quarter the size of an ordinary cone, or a slider. You could have strawberry or some other flavour put on the top of your ice cream. If it had been a good week, your mother might send you out with a bowl to get a few scoops of ice cream – ‘hundreds and thousands’ was optional.

Bruce Johnstone describes community action in the form of the Ratepayers’ Association, formed in the early 1950s:

The tenants of the Pilton and Crewe houses formed a Ratepayers Association. Its purpose was to be a focus group for all tenants and for issues with Gumley (the housing manager) and the Town Council. However, an annual programme of social events was also arranged to foster a Community spirit. My recollection was of attending the Annual Christmas Party, held in Granton School, in the early 1950s.

The Christmas Party is also recalled by the father of Steve Oliver, now in Duns in the Borders of Scotland:

He and his sister, my Auntie Pat, used to go to them. From what my dad recalls, the parties consisted of:

- A film, usually a silent one, accompanied by a piano
- A magician
- Singing

Ruth Nordhoy, now of Seattle, USA, also recalls the Ratepayers’ Association events and the strong sense of community which they imbued:

The Ratepayers also held dances in Granton School from time to time. I remember one as late as 1956 that I attended – old folks and young folks having a great time together.

## **Decline**

Some of Edinburgh council's planning decisions may have contributed to the decline of the Pilton schemes and neighbouring areas including Muirhouse from the 1970s. The 'Edinburgh Evening News' of 14<sup>th</sup> January 1978 reports that West Pilton residents were to hold a meeting to ask Edinburgh District Council to suspend the policy of what the Tenants Association Chairman, David Shaw, described as 'indiscriminate dumping of 'problem families ' in West Pilton. The newspaper ('Evening News', 27<sup>th</sup> April 1978) also suggests that a plan to designate two blocks of houses at 1, West Pilton St and 23, West Pilton Circus as 'reception areas for homeless families' would 'create a 'ghetto'. However, local protests to Edinburgh City Council were apparently ignored and it is reported ('Evening News, 28<sup>th</sup> April 1978) that 'Mothers from Pilton with crying babies watched the deputation put their case in the council chamber', only for the members to decide by 34 votes to 27 to proceed with these plans. Local church leaders ('Edinburgh Evening News, 15<sup>th</sup> May 1978) and regional Labour councillors ('Edinburgh Evening News', 25<sup>th</sup> May 1978) also protested, to no avail.

The apparent 'dumping' of 'problem families in Pilton was not the only cause of concern. The housing stock and environment were deteriorating. Local people demanded improvements on home services, including electricity, and action to curb the stray dogs, which were reported to roam the neighbourhood ('Edinburgh Evening News, 14<sup>th</sup> January 1978). In 1977, Pilton residents and local government were establishing plans to work more closely together to keep people informed and encourage flow of information ('Edinburgh Evening News, 25<sup>th</sup> October 1977). Instead, the situation seems to have got worse. An article in 'The Scotsman' on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1979 reports on the submission of Pilton Central Committee's



'Pilton Study' to Edinburgh Council's Housing Committee. The report covers a number of neighbourhoods in North West Edinburgh, and West Pilton is described as being the most deprived. It is argued that many of the houses had been built with sub-standard materials, and that modernisation was urgently required. Public health was being affected by vermin, wild cats and dogs, blocked drains, derelict buildings and dirty stairs. Tenants reported feeling frustrated in their attempts to bring about change, and they felt stigmatised by council officials. The report suggests that new housing policies, establishing a local housing office and engaging with local people to explore options, such as new tenants' cooperatives, might improve the situation. A number of reports around this time describe investments for a 'facelift' for West Pilton ('Edinburgh Evening News, 1<sup>st</sup> November 1978, 29<sup>th</sup> March 1979) and an open meeting was held at Craigroyston High School in June 1979, 'to get local people to communicate and to attract the interest of those who might commit resources to help the area' ('Edinburgh Evening News, 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1979).

A paper by the City's Director of Housing on 7<sup>th</sup> April, 1981 provides a damning indictment of how West Pilton had been allowed to decline, repeating descriptions from the 1979 'Pilton Study' of physical problems that included large, derelict backyards, blocks of void houses creating 'particular wildernesses'. Vandalism was rife throughout the area, with graffiti, broken glass, damage to property, fences, trees and 'large numbers of stray dogs' making communal areas and stairs dirty. The report also notes the specific harms being caused to young people, who made up forty per cent of the local population, compared to an Edinburgh overall figure of twenty two per cent. It is argued that there was a lack of appropriate play facilities and a high concentration of families with social problems. In the week prior to the report being submitted, apparently twenty-tree 'back green' gates had been stolen by youths of 15-16 years, who had set them on fire in the 'back greens'.

Properties were proving hard to let. There was no waiting list demand and eighteen per cent of properties were vacant. This compared to five per

cent across the whole of Edinburgh. Residents, especially older people, were moving out, and people did not want to move in. The Director suggests that 'families which might be an asset are deterred from moving into the area, and those which are already there are persuaded to move out', creating a downward spiral:

The consequence is that the only families which accept tenancies in West Pilton are those with problems of one kind or another and, in general, are unable to wait until, in terms of the letting regulations, they qualify for another area.

It was noted that over half of the city's long term housing vacancies (more than 14 weeks) occurred in Pilton and that, in one year, vacancies had increased from 172 to 316 houses, most of which had been vacant for more than a year. The Housing report emphasises that the housing problem was inextricably linked to a concentration of other social, economic and cultural problems in what was a small locality:

The very scale of the problems in West Pilton must be related to the overall social and economic deprivation in the area, the high crime rate, and the general atmosphere of apathy and failure. The poor external environment is the cause of these attitudes as well as the result. People who might otherwise be satisfactory tenants give up hope when any attempt to cultivate a garden results in it being vandalised; when they cannot clean a stair because neighbours will not cooperate; when the sheer scale of the problems dampens the will of new tenants.

There was a high incidence of serious rent arrears and the report also refers to high levels of unemployment and of single parent families. Despite all of this, the Housing Director notes that few complaints were received from tenants. He suggests that these things might have become such a 'way of life' that people had simply become too 'apathetic' to complain. He also opines that people might be frightened to complain

about 'anti-social' neighbours, for fear of reprisals; he mentioned that this was a high crime area. The Housing Director argues that there was 'an absence of community spirit in West Pilton'. His report concludes with recommendations to redevelop the area, involving private developers as part of the plan, demolishing large parts of the scheme and building on existing recreational open space.

Moving forward, in 1983, the Council adopted a disposal strategy for approximately one-half of the West Pilton housing stock (Rosenburg, 1995). The remainder of the housing on the scheme was retained by the local authority and refurbished (Rosenburg, 1995). Approximately 740 flatted properties were transferred to a consortium of three private developers: Miller Homes, Wimpey and Barratt. The scale of the venture is described in a 1984 newspaper report ('Edinburgh Evening News', 19<sup>th</sup> November 1984), which asserts that West Pilton still had a long way to go before it could be seen as a regeneration success story:

What lifeblood it must have had has all but dried out...The new building can provide the impetus, the infusion of hopeful young families which might – MIGHT – just rub off, but we've been through that once before...Perhaps this time – how often have they thought that in West Pilton? – things will change for the better and stay that way.

('Edinburgh Evening News', 19<sup>th</sup> November 1984)

Problems with the housing stock disposals policy in West Pilton have been highlighted in a review (Rosenburg, 1995), which found an alarmingly high level of repossessions, to the extent that, by 1992, twenty per cent of first-time buyers in West Pilton had lost their homes. Rosenberg (1995) attributes this to high-risk lending to financially marginal purchasers, over-zealous marketing and the over-ambitious scale of the initiative, which may have been based on a miscalculation of the potential strength of demand for property in the area. Hastings (2004) describes regeneration attempts

between 1993 and 2000 when around £76 million was invested across the whole Pilton area. There was extensive demolition work, new building and housing refurbishment, programmes to address crime and unemployment, and a range of social and environmental interventions. Until the beginning of the regeneration initiative, almost all households rented from the City Council, but there was a growth over this period of housing association and co-operative properties available for rent, as well as introduction of an owner-occupied sector (Hastings, 2004). Between 1982 and 1988, owner-occupied dwellings in Pilton/Muirhouse increased from 4% - 18% but the local authority still managed around 80% of the housing stock (Pilton/Muirhouse Local Profile and Context Statement, Lothian Regional Council Department of Planning, November 1988). By 1991, it was reported (Breitenbach, 1996, in Pilton Press Cuttings, Vol 1, 1832-1994) that only 59% of housing stock remained in local authority control.

## **Drugs and HIV/AIDS**

The history of Pilton and Muirhouse in the 1980s and 1990s cannot be written without reference to the emergence of a local heroin-injecting drug culture, which led to Edinburgh gaining a reputation as the 'AIDS Capital of Europe' (Coyle, 2008). It has been argued (Robertson and Richardson, 2007, p.491) that political upheaval in Afghanistan and Iran led to excessive supplies of heroin in many European cities and a shift of drug consumer from the 'student or dissident class to the socially deprived populations', including in areas like Pilton and Muirhouse. Medical services described damage being caused by injecting; for instance, cases of hepatitis, abscess and endocarditis became common and forensic pathologists noted a rise in sudden deaths in young people (Robertson and Richardson, 2007).

Robertson and Richardson (2007, p.491) document as a

practical and pragmatic response from a surgical supplies retailer in Edinburgh city centre...to sell, at low cost, needles and injecting equipment even in the knowledge that these would be used to administer illegal drugs.

However, local objections forced this outlet to cease operation, which meant that the ability of drug users in Edinburgh to obtain clean injecting equipment was, consequently, even more severely curtailed (Robertson and Richardson, 2007). In 1982, Robertson's surgery in Muirhouse began a small research study to investigate the suggestion that injecting was expanding, and that hepatitis cases were increasing. The Muirhouse doctors adopted a practice of providing injecting equipment for patients who were unwilling or unable to cease injecting (Robertson and Richardson, 2007). Cases continued to increase, however, and were made worse by the closure of the city's only methadone clinic at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital (Robertson and Richardson, 2007). In 1985, a test became available for the detection of antibodies to the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), then known as HTLV-3. In Edinburgh, virologists and a local public health doctor retrieved some samples from injecting drug users attending the accident and emergency department. Over 60% of those tested were positive. It was not until 1987 that new needle exchange and drug services were established in Edinburgh, with the ethos of harm reduction, based on the assumption that the risk of giving clean needles and syringes was smaller than that of allowing sharing to continue (Robertson and Richardson, 2007).

In an article documenting the history of the HIV/AIDS pandemic over twenty years (Garfield, 2001), the Pilton/Muirhouse experience features as a seminal moment when it is reported that, in one test, the prevalence of HIV infection was fifty per cent or higher:

people shared their needles and spread disease. In fact, grim experience with an earlier hepatitis outbreak showed that there was no more efficient way of doing so; in one particular story, a needle was passed around one estate in Muirhouse for three months.

A commentary in the 'Sunday Telegraph' of 4<sup>th</sup> January 1987 confirmed the external impression of West Pilton and the impact that poverty, drugs and HIV/AIDS were deemed to be having:

Abandoned – I thought of this as I went into West Pilton estate...These grey houses smell of poverty. Thin old women and starved-looking children go to shops that hide their windows behind thick metal. If you are abandoned as lost in the polite city of Edinburgh, you are *really* abandoned. These are the estates that are infested with drugs and AIDS.

A local resident is reported in the 'Evening News' of 20<sup>th</sup> September 1988 as claiming that, 'You can get drugs on every street corner' and the neighbourhood featured in Irvine Welsh's novel 'Trainspotting' (Welsh, 1993) as the locus of a group of young, chaotic drug users. The Pilton/Muirhouse Local Profile and Context Statement, Lothian Regional Council Department of Planning, November 1988, p.6, states bleakly:

Pilton is known as one of the main concentrations of drug abuse in Edinburgh, and the combination of heroin abuse, the incidence of the AIDS virus and drug related criminal activity has a serious impact on the area.

One of the interviewees in my study, Gregor, worked in Pilton/Muirhouse throughout the 1980s and 1990s and he opined about the impact of HIV/AIDS on the local community:

I mean, I used to do all the funerals and nobody died of AIDS and yet you knew. But yet you knew that they had, but it was always cancer, and that's the way it was described...I've never really thought about it, but when I think back to the funerals, it was often the same family that was back two or three times in the time that I was there. And I think the thing that we all noticed when we were doing that here, was the amount of young people, as in under forty, that were dying. It was rarely that you had an old person. The other thing is that it was grannies that were doing all the caring in those days. And the people who are the grannies now, or should have been the grannies, have died...so there's a generation missing and

the traditional generation for looking after children is the one that's missing.

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, a series of programmes sought to regenerate Pilton. For example, between 1990 and 1994, European Union funds matched by Scottish agencies provided £4 million 'to fight Pilton's poverty' ('Edinburgh Evening News, 9<sup>th</sup> January 1990, 15<sup>th</sup> June 1994). The UK Government's failure to continue this project was criticised ('The Scotsman', 16<sup>th</sup> June 1994) by the House of Lords European Scrutiny Committee after a visit to Pilton, who reported that the programme had enabled valuable work to be done in relieving the effects of poverty and in starting to rebuild the economic and social lives of such severely deprived communities. John Mulvey, Pilton Partnership coordinator, is quoted as saying, 'We have done some work with the schools and with the employment agencies. But other than that, we have done no work with young people' ('The Scotsman', 16<sup>th</sup> June 1994). In an 'Economic and social profile of Greater Pilton' (Breitenbach, 1996, in Pilton Press Cuttings, Vol 1, 1832-1994) reports continued of high unemployment rates, poor salaries for those who were in work, low levels of educational qualifications and participation in Government training schemes. Localised health problems are also mentioned, including high rates of illness associated with unhealthy lifestyles, such as cancers and heart disease.

### **Contemporary deprivation**

Brent (2009) argues that, in describing poor neighbourhoods, 'official' documents, with maps, bar charts and statistics, fail to tell the stories of people's lived experience, instead reducing 'social actors' to diagrams and statistical lists. Other parts of this thesis attempt to address these deficits by capturing the subjective experiences of young people in West Pilton and adults who interact with them. As others, (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2006, 2007, 2009) have pointed out, structural economic inequality impacts on individuals in a range of ways, including affecting physical and mental health, harmful use of drugs and

alcohol, as well as educational attainment and opportunities in the labour market. Some of these issues will now be described.

In Government statistics, Pilton is reported as a location of deprivation, with health and education problems, unemployment and crime. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) (Scottish Government, 2012c) provides a relative ranking of the Data Zones in Scotland from 1 (most deprived) to 6505 (least deprived) based on a weighted combination of data in the domains of Current Income, Housing, Health, Education, Skills and Training, Employment, Geographic Access to Services, and Crime. The SIMD is presented at data zone level, enabling small pockets of deprivation to be identified. The data zones, which have a median population size of 769, are ranked from most deprived (1) to least deprived (6,505) on the overall SIMD and on each of the individual domains. Data zone S01002279 is in the centre of West Pilton, where PYCP is based, and where most interviews and all observation sessions took place. Data zone S01002279 is significantly deprived compared to the rest of Scotland, coming in the lowest decile (10%) in terms of Current Income, Health, Education, Skills and Training, Employment, and Crime (Scottish Government, 2012c). It scores slightly better on Housing, but it is still in the lowest vigintile (20%) (Scottish Government, 2012c). The area's overall placing in terms of deprivation compared to the rest of Scotland, 313 out of 6,505, is improved because of its high scoring on Geographic Access to Services, 5,447 out of 6,505 (Scottish Government, 2012c).



## Censuses 2001 and 2011



City of Edinburgh Council – Census 2001



City of Edinburgh Council – from Census 2011



Pilton Area Statistic Ward – from Census 2001



EH4 4 Postcode Area – from Census 2011

**Figure 3.5 Maps of Edinburgh and Pilton Census areas, 2001 and 2011 (Scotland's census, 2016).**

**Unless otherwise stated, the data in the following sections is drawn from the 2001 and 2011 censuses (Scotland's census, 2016).**

Comparisons are drawn between Pilton, Edinburgh and Scotland and the data supports the case that this neighbourhood has been deprived and disadvantaged and in many ways different from the rest of the city throughout this period. There are strikingly different demographics between Pilton and other places, sometimes more so when comparing with Edinburgh, as opposed to Scotland overall. The geographical loci for data collection have changed over this period so that it is possible to compare trends but not always to compare like for like data. Figure 3.5 (Scotland's

census, 2016) shows the census areas in 2001 and 2011 for the City of Edinburgh, which have changed slightly, as well as the Pilton Census Area Statistic Ward, as described in the Census 2001 and the 2011 Census data zone for postcode area EH4 4, where PYCP is located (Scotland's census, 2016). Although with the latter two areas the boundaries for the different dates differ, the demographics are similar, young people in this study would live and/or socialise in these areas<sup>2</sup>, and it is reasonable to generalise from comparing the results.

## Ethnicity

**Population – Place of birth 2001**

2001	Total population	Scotland	% Scotland	Other UK	% Other UK	European Union	% European Union	Other	% Other
Pilton EH4 4 Postcode area	8,055	7,163	89	511	6	110	1	271	3
Edinburgh Council	448,624	348,931	78	62,123	14	12,574	3	24,996	6
Scotland	5,062,011	4,410,400	87	459,099	9	66,206	1	126,306	2

**Population – Place of birth 2011**

2011	Total population	Scotland	% Scotland	Other UK	% Other UK	European Union	% European Union	Other	% Other
Pilton EH4 4 Postcode area	10,524	8,079	77	553	5	914	9	978	9
Edinburgh Council	476,626	334,626	70	66,206	14	33,007	7	42,787	9
Scotland	5,295,403	4,411,884	83	513,522	10	160,237	3	209,760	4

**Table 3.1 Pilton ethnicity 2001 and 2011**

Table 3.1 shows how the immigrant proportion of the population of Scotland and Edinburgh has grown in the twenty-first century and indicates that the change to the population of Pilton has been more significant than elsewhere. In 2001, immigrants constituted only 4% of the Pilton population. By 2011, this had swelled to 18%, so that one in five 'Piltoners' was non-UK born. The total is not massively different from the situation in the rest of Edinburgh (16%), but far exceeds the Scottish figure (7%). However, the proportion of people in Pilton from other parts of the UK has remained consistently low, in fact reducing from 6% in 2001 to 5% in 2011,

<sup>2</sup> All percentages rounded to nearest %.

whereas Edinburgh's total has remained static at a far higher rate of 14% and Scotland's total has also only changed slightly, increasing from 9% to 10%.

Table 3.2 shows that Pilton also has a relatively high proportion of young people. Although in the 16-24 category, Pilton (13%) is typical of Scotland (12%) and lower than Edinburgh (15% - probably swelled due to the student, tourist and transient working populations), one in four people living in Pilton is under 16 years of age. Table 3.3 shows that household sizes in Pilton are not very different from elsewhere. Table 3.4 demonstrates that there is a far higher proportion of lone parent households with dependent children (17%) than elsewhere (Edinburgh 6%, Scotland 7%). In all the contexts, the parent-carer was likely to be the mother.

Age – 2011

2011	Total population	Mean age	Median age	Age 16-24	% Age 16-24	Age 0-15	% Age 0-15
Pilton EH4 4 Postcode area	10,524	32.7	31	1,419	13	2,613	25
Edinburgh Council	476,626	38.5	36	71,868	15	72,202	15
Scotland	5,295,403	40.3	41	632,488	12	916,331	17

**Table 3.2 Ages of people in Pilton, 2011**

Household size – Number of persons – 2011

2011	All occupied household spaces	1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5	%	6	%	7	%	8	%
Pilton EH4 4 Postcode area	4,662	1,754	38	1,272	27	813	17	496	11	225	5	64	1	28	1	10	<1
Edinburgh Council	223,051	87,176	39	74,692	33	30,484	14	21,888	9	7,008	3	1,228	1	382	<1	193	<1
Scotland	2,372,777	823,314	35	807,658	34	357,491	15	272,329	11	86,722	4	18,389	1	4,614	<1	2,260	<1

**Table 3.3 Household sizes in Pilton, 2011**

Lone parent households with dependent children 2011

2011	All households	Lone parent households	% Lone parent households	Lone women households	% Lone households = women
Pilton EH4 4 Postcode area	4,662	777	17	719	93
Edinburgh Council	223,051	12,968	6	11,881	92
Scotland	2,372,777	169,707	7	156,414	92

**Table 3.4 Lone parent households in Pilton, 2011**

## Health

In the Forth Community Plan (Forth Neighbourhood Partnership, 2008a), under Priority no. 1, 'Health', it was noted that there was a need to improve services and support related to mental health and stress, drug and alcohol misuse and generally to improve information and access to health services. According to the 2011 census (Table 3.5), Piltoners are fairly typical of other Scots in their experiences of having a long-term health problem or disability that affects their daily lives (Pilton 20%; Edinburgh 16%; Scotland 20%) or having one or more long-term health condition, such as hearing or sight problems, learning or developmental disorders, physical or mental health problems (Pilton 29%; Edinburgh 27%; Scotland 30%). However, they self-report higher levels of what they regard as 'very bad' or 'bad' general health (Pilton 7%; Edinburgh 4%; Scotland 6%).

Health – 2011

2011	Total population	V. good or good health	Fair health	V. bad or bad health	Long-term health problem or disability – affecting daily life	1 or more long-term health condition
Pilton EH4 4 Postcode area	10,524	8,470	1,363	691	2,102	3,016
Edinburgh Council	476,626	410,457	46,505	19,664	76,827	127,098
Scotland	5,295,403	4,353,481	644,881	297,041	1,040,371	1,584,727

2011	% V. good or good health	% Fair health	% V. bad or bad health	% Long-term health problem or disability – affecting daily life	% 1 or more long-term health condition
Pilton EH4 4 Postcode area	80	13	7	20	29
Edinburgh Council	86	10	4	16	27
Scotland	82	12	6	20	30

**Table 3.5 Self-reported health assessment in Pilton, 2011**

In 2007, (the last period from when this data is available), 12% of people in data zone S01002279 were prescribed drugs for anxiety, depression and psychosis (Scottish Government, 2009a). West Pilton continued to have much higher drug and alcohol problems, compared to Edinburgh and Scotland, as Table 3.6 (Scottish Government, 2009a) shows:

	West Pilton data zone S01002279	City of Edinburgh	Scotland
Hospital admissions for alcohol misuse per 100,000 population	2,312.78	671.1	722.66
Hospital admissions for drug misuse per 100,000 population	963.66	173.08	127.46

**Table 3.6 Hospital admissions for alcohol and drug misuse, 2007**

## **Housing**

The demographic changes in Pilton have undoubtedly been affected by the greater availability of cheap rental properties, compared to elsewhere. Table 3.7 shows that typical housing tenure in Pilton is vastly different from the situation in the rest of Edinburgh and Scotland. In Pilton, the majority of people rent from the local authority (32%) or housing associations (22%). This compares with an Edinburgh total of 17% and a Scottish total of 24% for the two categories combined. Only 30% of people own their property in Pilton, with or without a mortgage, compared to Edinburgh and Scotland statistics of 59% and 62% respectively. The Registers of Scotland (2016) provides data on house sales in Scotland. From a snapshot check during the period of the fieldwork, it was evident that average house prices in Pilton were considerably lower than in Edinburgh and the rest of Scotland. In January 2013, based on 4,655 sales, the average house price in Scotland was £149,019. Edinburgh was considerably more expensive; based on 527 sales, the average price was £217,453. In contrast, based on the four sales that took place in Pilton (postcode area EH4 4), the average price was £80,025, with the lowest price being £52,000, and the highest £105,000.

2011	All households	Owned outright	Owned: Mortgage or loan	Shared ownership	Council rented	Other social rented	Private rented	Rented: Other	Rent-free
Pilton EH4 4 Postcode area	4,662	452	934	30	1511	1022	641	51	21
Edinburgh Council	223,051	60,420	71,057	1,342	20,305	17,651	45,689	4,189	2,398
Scotland	2,372,777	660,643	800,175	10,168	312,745	263,674	263,459	31,433	30,480

2011	% Owned outright	% Owned: Mortgage or loan	% Shared ownership	% Council rented	% Other social rented	% Private rented	% Rented: Other	% Rent-free
Pilton EH4 4 Postcode area	10	20	1	32	22	14	1	<1
Edinburgh Council	27	32	1	9	8	20	2	1
Scotland	28	34	<1	13	11	11	1	1

**Table 3.7 Housing tenure in Pilton, 2011**

### Employment/unemployment

Table 3.8 compares the unemployment statistics between 2001 and 2011. In Edinburgh and across the country, the situation has become worse and the impact has been especially severe on young people. However, the change in Pilton across the whole population (4% - 9%) has been far more dramatic than elsewhere (Edinburgh, 3% - 5%; Scotland, 4% - 5%). The impact of unemployment on the young has been more severe than on the rest of the population, with Pilton's 16-24 rate doubling from 7% – 14% and Edinburgh's (4% - 10%) and Scotland's (7% - 9%) rates for this age group also increasing, the former dramatically, though both remain significantly lower than is the case in Pilton.

#### Unemployed 2001

2001	Total population (Age 16-74)	Number unemployed	% unemployed	Age 16-24 Total population	Number 16-24 unemployed	% 16-24 unemployed
Pilton Ward	5,840	256	4	1,009	66	7
Edinburgh Council	342,431	9,892	3	64,481	2,500	4
Scotland	3,731,079	148,082	4	566,477	41,222	7

#### Unemployed 2011

2011	Total population (Age 16-74)	Number unemployed	% unemployed	Age 16-24 Total population	Number 16-24 unemployed	% 16-24 unemployed
Pilton EH4 4 Postcode area	7,584	673	9	1,419	202	14
Edinburgh Council	370,018	14,517	5	71,868	7,174	10
Scotland	3,970,530	189,414	5	632,488	57,222	9

**Table 3.8 Unemployment in Pilton, Edinburgh and Scotland, 2001 and 2011**

Table 3.9 shows that there are also differences between the kinds of jobs that people who are in employment at the time of the 2011 census do, compared to Edinburgh and Scotland, with the differences between Pilton and Edinburgh statistics being particularly striking. ‘Piltoners’ are far more likely to be in low-paid, low-skilled employment. They are significantly more likely (26%) than others (Edinburgh 11%; Scotland 12%) to be carrying out what are defined as ‘Elementary’, i.e. ‘unskilled’ jobs. They are also significantly less likely to be carrying out senior managerial, professional or technical roles (Pilton 20%; Edinburgh 52%; Scotland 38%). The other area of difference is that they are more likely to be working in ‘Caring/Leisure/Service’ industries (Pilton 14%; Edinburgh 4%; Scotland 38%).

People aged 16-74 in employment – 2011

2011	All	Manager/Director/ Senior Official	Professional	Associate professional & Technical	Admin/ Secretarial	Skilled trades	Caring/ Leisure/ Service	Sales/Customer Service	Process/plant/Machine operatives	Elementary occupations
Pilton EH4 4 Postcode area	4,301	213	306	343	453	464	597	490	305	1,130
Edinburgh Council	121,562	13,848	30,448	19,383	8,042	15,558	4,387	8,069	8,162	13,665
Scotland	2,516,895	210,819	421,639	318,380	286,144	315,177	244,508	234,367	193,594	292,267

2011	%Manager/Director/ Senior Official	%Professional	%Associate professional & Technical	%Admin/ Secretarial	%Skilled trades	%Caring/Leisure /Service	%Sales/Customer Service	%Process/plant/ Machine operatives	%Elementary occupations
Pilton EH4 4 Postcode area	5	7	8	11	11	14	11	7	26
Edinburgh Council	11	25	16	7	13	4	7	7	11
Scotland	8	17	13	11	13	10	9	8	12

**Table 3.9 Employment categories in Pilton, Edinburgh and Scotland, 2011**

As has been found in other studies which discuss youth engagement with the labour market (for example, Gunter and Watt, 2009; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; McDowell, 2003), the kinds of jobs carried out by men and women often differ. Table 3.10 shows the breakdown by gender of occupations in Pilton. Women were far more likely than men to carry out roles categorised as ‘Administrative and Secretarial’ (15% to 16%), ‘Caring, Leisure and other Services’ (21% to 7%) and ‘Sales and Customer Service’ (14% to 8%). Men, on the other hand, carried out roles more traditionally deemed to be ‘masculine’, such as ‘Process, Plant and

Machine Operatives' (13% to 1%) and 'Skilled trades occupations' (18% to 3%).

2011 Pilton EH4 4 Postcode area	All	Manager/Director/ Senior Official	Professional	Associate professional & Technical	Admin/ Secretarial	Skilled trades	Caring/ Leisure/ Service	Sales/Customer Service	Process/plant/Machine operatives	Elementary occupations
Males	2,167	111	142	182	123	400	145	184	273	607
Females	2,134	102	164	161	330	64	452	306	32	523

2011 Pilton EH4 4 Postcode area	%Manager/Director/ Senior Official	%Professional	%Associate professional & Technical	%Admin/ Secretarial	%Skilled trades	%Caring/Leisure /Service	%Sales/Customer Service	%Process/plant/ Machine operatives	%Elementary occupations
Males	5	7	8	6	18	7	8	13	28
Females	5	8	8	15	3	21	14	1	25

**Table 3.10 Gender breakdown of occupations in Pilton, 2011**

## Education

(Unless otherwise referenced, the newspaper articles and reports cited have been accessed from the archive section of [www.educationscotland.gov.uk](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk), Accessed 17 April 2016).

The nearest secondary school, Craigroyston Community High School, is located on the boundary between West Pilton and Muirhouse – see Figure 3.3. However, in this study – see Table 3.11 - many young people attended other schools outside the district.

### Schools attended by research participants

Craigroyston	10	Craigroyston and Broughton	1
Leith Academy and Craigroyston	1	St. Augustine's	8
Broughton	2	Trinity	1
Royal High	1	Educated overseas	1

**Table 3.11 Schools attended by young people**

Educational attainment can be linked to economic hardship (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). The young people who attend Craigroyston are likely to be poorer than those attending other schools. Table 3.12 shows that the number of students receiving free school meals (means-tested) in 2012 – 13 was significantly higher than in all the other schools that young people in this study attended, and double the average for Edinburgh overall and Scotland.



Craigroyston	38.4
Broughton	19.1
St Augustine's	18.2
Leith Academy	21.2
Trinity	13.1
Royal High	7.1
Edinburgh overall	14.5
Scotland overall	15.5

**Table 3.12 Free school meals, 2012-13**

Several interviewees suggested that Craigroyston had a 'bad' reputation and that local parents believe that their children will have more opportunities if they are schooled elsewhere. Craigroyston certainly appears to have problems. In 2012-13 (Table 3.13), unauthorised student absences (5.2%) were more than double the Edinburgh (2.1%) and Scottish (2.5%) averages, although all of the schools attended score badly compared to elsewhere, with the exception of Trinity 2.1%, which is the same as the Edinburgh average and the Royal High (0.9%), which scores significantly higher.

	Authorised absences	Unauthorised absences
Craigroyston	6.1	5.2
Broughton	4.6	3.3
St Augustine's	6.5	3.6
Leith Academy	5.8	3.3
Trinity	5.9	2.1
Royal High	4.9	0.9
Edinburgh overall	5.3	2.1
Scotland overall	5.5	2.5

**Table 3.13 % absences from school, years S1-S5 in 2012-13**

As Table 3.14 demonstrates, in 2012-13, fewer young people at Craigroyston than at other schools stayed on beyond the compulsory schooling age of 16 to year S5 (56%). The discrepancies are even greater for staying on to year S6, with the statistics for Craigroyston (30%) being fewer than half of that for Edinburgh as a whole (65%) and almost half the Scottish average (59%).

	Staying on to S5	Staying on to S6
Craigroyston	56	30
Broughton	76	58
St Augustine's	83	67
Leith Academy	73	65
Trinity	82	65
Royal High	87	80
Edinburgh overall	81	65
Scotland overall	78	59

**Table 3.14 School 'staying-on' rates, 2012-13**

This leaving rate means that, as Table 3.15 shows, in 2012 – 13, academic attainment was considerably worse at Craigroyston than at the other schools. Pupils elsewhere in Edinburgh (40%) and Scotland (38%) are around ten times more likely than Craigroyston students (4%) to receive five or more awards at SCQF Level 3. Other schools fared better, although only Trinity (43%) and the Royal High (58%) have better results than the Edinburgh and Scotland averages.

Craigroyston	4
Broughton	33
St Augustine's	26
Leith Academy	24
Trinity	43
Royal High	58
Edinburgh overall	40
Scotland overall	38

**Table 3.15 % of S4 year group receiving 5 or more awards at SCQF Level 3, 2012-13**

School experiences impact on students' leaver destinations. As Table 3.16 shows, the statistics for 2012-13 are incomplete for Craigroyston. This is not satisfactorily explained by the convention adopted to protect individuals' confidentiality that an asterisk is provided where the number is greater than zero and less than five. Only 58.9% of Craigroyston students' destinations are accounted for. From the figures that are available, Craigroyston students (20.5%) are significantly more likely than others to leave to start training schemes or to enter Further Education. The other schools' statistics are broadly similar, with the exception of the Royal High, where more than half of the students (55%) enter into Higher Education.

**% Leaver destinations in 2012-13 (\* indicates 0 people > and <5 people)**

	% Total	% Higher education	% Further education	% Training	% Employment	% Unemployed, seeking employment	% Unemployed, not seeking employment
Craigroyston	58.9	*	38.4	20.5	*	*	*
Broughton	99.4	28.3	28.3	9.4	20.8	9.4	3.1
St Augustine's	90.7	30.4	26.1	5.8	28.3	*	*
Leith Academy	96.3	27.3	22.5	7.5	29.4	9.6	*
Trinity	93.9	30.2	29.6	4.4	23.9	8.8	*
Royal High	91.6	55	16.7	3.8	19.1	*	*
Edinburgh overall	99.6	37.4	23.3	6.8	23.5	6.9	1.7
Scotland overall	99.6	36.3	24.5	4.1	25.1	7.9	1.7

**Table 3.16 % School leaver destinations, 2012-13**

Following the period of this research, a school inspection report (Din, 2015), in January 2015, reports improvements at Craigroyston, including noting the following 'key strengths.

- A shared vision which focusses on securing positive destinations for all young people.
- Strong engagement of partners in the development and delivery of the curriculum.
- Coordinated and high quality support for young people and their families.
- Staff and partners leading developments to improve the quality of young people's learning.
- Young people who are increasingly ambitious for their future.'

## Political arrangements

The City of Edinburgh is one of Scotland's 32 local government council areas. It includes urban Edinburgh and a three-square mile rural area. For the Scottish and UK Parliaments, West Pilton is part of the constituency of North Edinburgh and Leith (represented by Labour in both Parliaments at the time the research was conducted). Until 2007, Pilton, including the neighbouring area of East Pilton, formed one of fifty-eight wards which were part of the unitary City of Edinburgh Council (Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland, 2016). Figure 3.6 is a map of the Pilton electoral ward pre-2007. This encompassed East and West Pilton and part of Granton.



**Figure 3.6: Pilton ward pre-2007**



**Figure 3.7: Forth ward post-2007**

From 2007, West Pilton became part of a larger, newly-created multi-member Forth ward, which covers a far larger geographical area, including the residential areas of Muirhouse, Salvesen, Pilton (East and West), Granton, Wardie, Trinity and the adjacent development area around Granton Harbour (Forth Neighbourhood Partnership 2008b), a population of 29,412 (see Figure 3.7). At the time the research was conducted, Forth ward had four councillors, one each of Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat and SNP, possibly reflecting the socio-economic and cultural diversity across the larger area (City of Edinburgh Council, 2016). Des, a youth worker, in his thirties, who had grown up on the neighbouring and similar estate of Royston, told me that, aside from workers who were connected with the council and political contexts, it would be very rare to find anyone in Pilton who would describe himself or herself as coming from Forth. Rather, he suggested that people might at the same time identify with their very local areas and, on a broader scale, with the idea of coming from North Edinburgh:

The community, North Edinburgh to me is split into almost four different sort of communities. From a, growing up I was very much from Royston, and then there were from Pilton, there's people from

Muirhouse and there's people from kindae Drylaw...I think when people get a little bit older, they're much more from North Edinburgh...people from round about the Project here are from Pilton, very much so...I think that would be their definition as being Piltoners...it's not something I really kinda associate with as Forth. It's not descriptive to me. I'm quite kinda visual so North Edinburgh I can see in my head. I can't see Forth, other than the river.

### **The Edinburgh Partnership and Forth Neighbourhood Partnership**

The City of Edinburgh Council has the statutory duty to lead community planning in Edinburgh, and it does this through the Edinburgh Partnership, which brings together public sector agencies, including the NHS, community and business representatives, to develop joint responses to local issues and needs (Forth Neighbourhood Partnership, 2016). Since 2007, the Edinburgh Partnership's work has been supplemented and operationalised at more local levels by twelve Neighbourhood Partnerships. Forth Neighbourhood Partnership, with boundaries equivalent to the new multi-member council ward which includes West Pilton, was established to engage organisations to work together with local people to improve public services and the quality of life for local residents. The Partnership is chaired by one of the local Forth Councillors and the three other councillors are also members, along with representatives from each of the four local Community Councils and from the City of Edinburgh Council, Lothian and Borders Police, Edinburgh's Telford College, NHS Lothian, Waterfront Edinburgh, SBC North Edinburgh and North Edinburgh Trust.

The activities of the Partnership include:

- Having input into strategic decisions that affect the local area.
- Making recommendations to the Council and partner organisations.
- Consulting on the Local Community Plan.

- Awarding small grants for local projects.
- Informing the development of city strategies and making sure they reflect local needs and priorities.

(Forth Neighbourhood Partnership, 2016)

### **Total Craigroyston**

In early 2012, 'Total Craigroyston', described as 'an approach rather than a project!' (Mackay, 2012a, 2012b), was established 'to improve outcomes for children and families in the neighbourhood around Craigroyston Community High School', which includes West Pilton. The project ran for four years and ceased in 2016 (North Edinburgh News, 2016). The stated intention was to ensure that statutory and voluntary sectors worked together and to engage with people who live in the area and with local staff in deciding priorities and developing and delivering activities. In 2012, nine consultation events were held, involving 215 local residents and front-line staff (Mackay and Packer, 2012) to produce a 'Road Map' for action (SNOOK, 2012). A small staff team employed by City of Edinburgh Council was established, and staff time was also allocated by Police Scotland, NHS Scotland, Community Learning and Development, the Edinburgh Partnership, Muirhouse Link-up and Save the Children. The manager of PYCP was included on the 'Management Group', which had an advisory function.

By December 2012, it was reported (Forth Neighbourhood Partnership, 2012) that the 'North Edinburgh Youth Issues Forum'<sup>3</sup> had produced a 'youth and children's activity calendar' that had been made available on the Forth Neighbourhood Partnership website (Forth Neighbourhood Partnership, 2016). There was also discussion of a range of youth-focussed activities, including two 'partnership groups', the first to 'identify and support young people who have left school and who are not yet in

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<sup>3</sup> (Sic. – see the discussion in Chapter Six about the disputed name of this group)

employment or training and the other one...to explore how we can reduce offending and improve community safety' (Forth Neighbourhood Partnership, 2012). This was as far as the 'approach' had progressed during the fieldwork period. However, by late 2013, achievements were being cited across a range of areas affecting young people (Mackay, 2013). This is reported as improving exam attainment at Craigroyston Community High School, more young people leaving school and going into 'positive destinations' and fewer school exclusions (Mackay, 2013).

## **Conclusions**

This chapter has described the historical and contemporary contexts of Pilton. Poverty, stigmatisation and disadvantage have continued through generations. The emergence of drug use and its impact on the health and cohesion of the area has had material impacts as well as affecting the way that local people feel about their area and how they are regarded by others. Policy makers at national and city levels have, at various times, intervened in ways that made things better temporarily but there has been an overall lack of the coherent actions over sustained periods of time that might embed permanent improvements. The latest, the Total Craigroyston initiative has been a temporary project, concluding in 2015.

There have been changes in the types of housing tenure and, even more so, in the ethnic make-up of the population. However, in these as in many other areas, Pilton remains very different from the rest of the city of Edinburgh, and significantly more deprived. I have discussed suggestions from online accounts that suggest that a community cohesion that used to co-exist alongside the poverty, may have, to some extent, passed. However, as subsequent chapters explore subjective experiences of youth transitions, such a broad assessment will be challenged, in favour of an analysis that suggests that, as must have been the subjective reality in the past, individuals' experiences are varied and dynamic, in spite of daily hardships.

**Introduction**

This chapter commences with a description of the methodology that contextualises the study, including theoretical and epistemological positions and emphasising the influence of the sociology of Norbert Elias (1994, 1983, 1978). I would describe the research as a case study with an ethnographic approach. According to Kirkpatrick (2009, p. 21), ethnographic studies 'aim to provide an authentic account of a segment of social life in terms that disclose its meaning for the people who live in it'. This has been my intention in planning and undertaking the study and analysing the data gathered. However, as Bell (2005), Denscombe (2010) and Yin (2009, 1993) have pointed out, ethnographic studies tend to take place over long periods of time and this was not possible. I have followed the ethnographic method, in the senses that Denscombe (2010) describe: as the researcher, I have gone a journey of discovery, carried out fieldwork in young people's everyday environments, trying not to disturb this, paying attention to how the research subjects understand things and taking a holistic approach by drawing on many sources of data, (though overall prioritising the individual accounts of young people in interviews). My discussion of the methods I have employed, including the fieldwork, will emphasise the intention to capture the dynamic and interactive nature of individual and collective human experience for young people in Pilton.

I will provide a summary of the young research participants and I will discuss why the case study approach has been an appropriate method to answer the research questions being asked, as well as describing the methods employed within this case study. Denscombe (2010) states that ethnographic studies do more than describe; they construct conclusions based on what is observed. I have therefore aimed to highlight incidents and feedback that seem to me to illustrate important issues that help us to understand young people's realities and experiences. My analysis is based on what I interpreted from observing and interviewing young people in this



specific spatial, cultural and temporal context. The methods employed have some elements of grounded theory (Denscombe, 2010) , in the sense that the research questions were broad, focussing on prioritising what young people said were the most important issues for them as they managed transitions, rather than testing a hypothesis. However, what I have considered to be important and the conclusions I draw are influenced by my own history and context and theoretical perspective, notably by Elias (1983, 1978).

I will explain how my initial research questions emerged and why these changed as my interpretation and critique of the concept of resilience developed from initial exploration of the literature. I will discuss how I gained access to young people and was able to establish a position of trust with them and with staff. In doing so, I will also discuss ethical considerations that impacted on my decisions. As the researcher, I became a part of networks through my interaction with local people. I will describe my own feelings about Pilton on commencing the study, including my assessment at that time about the relationship of the young people to the place. I will discuss how my approach adapted to the environmental conditions in which the study was carried out and as a reflexive response to the interactions that were taking place between myself and the research participants. Drawing extensively from field notes, I will explain what difference I believe these adaptations had on the research situations and the quality of the data gained. Ever conscious of the subjective nature of my analysis, I will discuss my emotional and analytical perceptions at various stages in the research, specifically referencing events where my sense of risk and lack of personal safety were heightened. I have hopefully elicited honest and intimate responses from research participants, while being careful not to risk harm to them. However, I will also discuss what I consider to be some limitations of the research approaches I adopted.

As the fieldwork finished in 2013, I believe that there has been enough distance to make a critical analysis that is as true as possible to the intended meanings of young people, with as little distortion from me as

possible. In terms of generalising from this study, Sayer (1992) argues that the validity and usefulness of research should not be assessed against measures of 'representativeness' and suggests that an intensive study such as this can be as insightful as more extensive studies.

## **Methodology**

Methodology refers to the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes (Travers, 2001). My research explore individuals' perspectives and experiences in Pilton within a context which is strongly influenced by structural social and economic inequalities. This study has adhered largely to a social constructionist epistemological position, aiming to extend understanding of how people engage with their world and make sense of it (Crotty, 1998). The assumption is that understanding, significance, and meaning are developed not separately within the individual, but in coordination with other human beings. Thus, human beings rationalise their experience by creating a model of the social world, with language providing the means to describe and analyse reality (Travers, 2001).

I have drawn in particular on the theoretical perspectives of Elias (1983), who makes clear that there is a continuous correspondence between the social structure and the structure of the personality, the individual self. Elias (1978) also contends that social phenomena can only be comprehended by considering the complex and dynamic interactions between individuals, where each individual forms part of the environment, his/her family and his/her society. This study interprets this approach to explore 'the dynamics of social interweavings' (Elias, 1978, p. 29), the processes in which people engage and the power dynamics which structure human relationships. My findings and analysis are subjective, based on my interpretation of the relationships that I established. As Travers points out, this means that, as the researcher, I worked with the assumption that I have 'a superior insight' (Travers, 2001, p. 114).

## **The young people in this study**

The young people in this study should not be regarded as representative of all young adults in Pilton and/or surrounding areas, although many experiences will be shared with other young people. An important difference between this study and MacDonald's and Marsh's (2005) study in Teesside is that, even though in this study they were all aged 16 or over, most of the young people (23/26) were recruited through a local youth centre, Pilton Youth and Children's Project (PYCP), where all observation sessions took place. 17 interviews were undertaken at PYCP, one in Granton Youth Centre, two in West Pilton Neighbourhood Centre, and three at Telford College. These were, on the whole, young people who continued to use youth services at an older age than was the norm in MacDonald and Marsh's study (2005), which noted that young people, having 'grown out' of youth services described feeling that they had nothing to do, other than wander the streets. It is possible that the young people in the Pilton study may be more likely than others to have had family problems and difficulties at school and engagement with criminal justice agencies. Many described traumatic experiences in and out of formal education settings and said that support from youth services was vitally important, providing extra time for them to turn things around in a critical moment, to develop competences to enable them to interact in a constructive way with wider social systems while retaining their location-based social identities.

Table 4.1 gives a demographic breakdown of research participants.

**Table 4.1 The young people who took part in this study**

Name	Venue	Date	Age	Gender	At school?	Which school?	Employed?	At college?	Length of time in Pilton	Family arrangements (assume mum & dad unless noted.)	Drug use	Alcohol use	Crime
Andy	PYCP	26/11	20	Male	Left	Broughton Craigroyston	No	No	11 years	Family home. Father not around.	No	Not reported	Not reported
Bernard	PYCP	26/11	16	Male	Left	Craigroyston	No	No	4-5 years	Family home. Father not around.	No	Not reported	Not reported
Clare	PYCP	28/11	16	Female	Left	Craigroyston	No	Yes	Life	Family home.	No	Not reported	Not reported
Donald	PYCP	28/11	17	Male	At	Broughton	No	No	Life	Family home. Father not around.	No	Occasional	Not reported
Edgar	PYCP	28/11	17	Male	Left	St Augustine's	No	No	Life	Family home. Father not around.	Cannabis every day	Yes	Several - possession of a weapon
Fiona	PYCP	5/12	18	Female	Left	Craigroyston	No	No	8 years	Family home.	No	Yes	No
Grace	PYCP	5/12	16	Female	Left	Craigroyston	No	No. About to start.	11 years	Family home + niece + friend.	No	Yes	No
Helen	PYCP	12/12	16	Female	Left	Leith Academy Craigroyston	No	Yes	2-3 years	Auntie. Mother dead. Doesn't see father.	No	Yes. Asks auntie for permission	Minor incident, not followed through
Irene	PYCP	12/12	16	Female	Left	Craigroyston	No	No	Life – around the area.	Family home. Mother dead. Lives with friend's family. Pregnant.	No	Yes	Minor incident, not followed through
John	PYCP	12/12	16	Male	Left	Craigroyston	Yes	No	Moved here some years ago.	Used to live with grandmother but she died. Now lives with mother and brother. Father not around and lives in Leith.	No	Yes	Yes – smashing a window

Karen	GYC	14/1	20	Female	Left	Trinity	No	No	Granton	Family home. Carer since child for sick mother. Father not around. Pregnant but not with father who has 2 other children.	Cocaine Drone	Yes – not when pregnant.	Several – including assault and breach of the peace.
Leona	TC	15/1	20	Female	Left	Trinity	No	Yes	12 years	Family home. Only child. Father not at home but seems amicable.	Weed	Yes	No
Mark	TC	15/1	20	Male	Left	Overseas – Africa	No	Yes	6 years	Family home. Father overseas.	Not reported	Yes	Not reported
Nora	TC	18/1	18	Female	Left	Craigroyston	Yes	Yes	16 years	Family home.	Grass	Yes	Stopped and searched
Oonagh	PYCP	30/1	18	Female	Left	St Augustine's	No	No	Life	Family home. Stepfather. Father lives in other part of Edinburgh.	Cocaine Drone Speed Grass	Yes	Not reported
Patsy	PYCP	30/1	19	Female	Left	Craigroyston	No	No	Life. Born in Granton.	Family home. Father lives in other part of Edinburgh.	Cocaine Speed	Yes	Not reported but describes violent behaviour
Quinn	PYCP	30/1	18	Male	Left	St Augustine's	No	No	8-9 years	Family home. Stepfather.	Weed	Yes	Several. Including assault and breach of the peace.
Rob	PYCP	30/1	17	Male	Left	Broughton	No	No	Granton then 14 years in Pilton	Family home. Stepfather. Father not in touch though lives nearby. Baby on the way.	Cannabis every day	Not reported	Several. Including fires, breach of the peace, fighting, smoking cannabis on the street.

Steffi	PYCP	30/1	16	Female	At	Craigroyston	Yes	No	Muirhouse. Life.	Family home. Stepfather. Father not around.	No	Occasional	No
Tom	PYCP	4/2	23	Male	Left	Royal High	Yes	Yes. University.	Muirhouse. Moved 2 years ago to Silverknowes.	Lives with girlfriend. Close to family.	Grass	Yes. Most weekends.	No
Uri	PYCP	20/3	17	Male	At	Craigroyston	No	No	Life.	Family home. Got girlfriend pregnant but she had abortion.	Grass	Describes as non-drinker but will drink 12 beers at a party.	
Vincent	PYCP	20/3	22	Male	Left	St Augustine's	No	No	Life	Mum. Only child.	Cannabis	No	Not reported but describes violent behaviour
Willie	PYCP	20/3	19	Male	Left	St Augustine's	No	No	Life	Granny	Cannabis	Drinks a lot.	Not reported but describes violent behaviour
Xander	PYCP	21/3	21	Male	Left	St Augustine's	No	Yes	Life	Family home.	Grass Cocaine	Yes. 20 beers on a night out.	Not reported but used to be in a gang and got into fights.
Yvonne	WPNC	27/3	22	Female	Left	St Augustine's	Yes	No	Life. Drylaw for 5 years.	Family home.	No	Yes	Not reported. Implied no.
Zara	WPNC	27/3	23	Female	Left	St Augustine's	Yes	Yes. University.	Life. Originally Pennywell.	Family home.	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported. Implied no.

## Methods: The Case Study Approach

Sayer (1992) observes that method must take into consideration the nature of the subjects which are being studied. For this purpose, following Yin (2009), a case study approach, with its inclusion of context and multiple methods to gather, analyse and compare data has fitted with my intention to capture the complexities, multiple perspectives and range of experiences of young people growing up in West Pilton. This study has employed mixed methods, including elements of ethnography such as participant observation. The case study method has enabled me to explore not only individuals' sense of their own realities but also formal and informal structures and networks that affect them. According to Yin (2009), the case study needs to be regarded in its entirety, with the use of a range of methods providing a richer and stronger array of evidence than would have been accomplished by a single method. I am satisfied that this case study satisfies Yin's tests of *construct*, *external* and *reliability* validity (Yin, 2009). *Construct* validity (Yin, 2009) – using the correct operational measures - is evidenced by using multiple sources of evidence, establishing a chain of evidence and checking back where necessary and/or possible to verify my understandings as I was collecting the data. *External* validity (Yin, 2009) – defining how far the study's findings can be generalised – is evidenced by reference to theory and other studies (for example, Barry, 2005a; Brent, 2009; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; McDowell, 2003; Shildrick and MacDonald, 2007; Wacquant, 2008), which explore similar themes. By establishing a clear plan for the research and templates for the interviews and documenting what happened, including any changes, the study satisfies Yin's test of *reliability* validity and it could be repeated.

The homogeneity of young people's experience in working class communities is commonly exaggerated (Barnes, 2005). On the contrary, this study recognises that young people in Pilton live and manage with a range of dynamic and fluid realities. There are shared objective experiences; there are also objectively different experiences, a hierarchy

even within this neighbourhood and community. I therefore share with other researchers (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005) a conviction about the usefulness of new research to explore the *subjective* experiences of young working class people growing up in the same area where a range of *objective* social and economic disadvantages co-exist. From my direct experience of working with young people who had significant problems, including, though not limited to, becoming involved in drug and/or alcohol use, I had been angered by the disrespectful public discourse about young people and what I regarded as the demonisation of the kind of young people with whom the charity worked. Based on my experiences with young people in my work, who seemed to be able to withstand and overcome serious problems, in my research, I wanted to find positive stories of young, socially disadvantaged people demonstrating powers to cope and manage in difficult situations. I was not aware of other research that demonstrated that, and I had assumed that this was because it had not been of interest to researchers, not that such cases did not exist.

Stake (2008) suggests that what he describes as an intrinsic case study seeks better understanding of a particular case, whereas what he calls an instrumental case study seeks to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalisation. My study has elements of both of these; while looking for its own sake to understand more about the realities of young people living in Pilton, it also provides data which can be related to external discourses and theorising about youth, social exclusion and resilience. The realities perceived by people inside and outside the case are social, cultural, situational and contextual (Stake, 2008) and I therefore undertook research to understand the area and the local community as well as possible before conducting the field research. Throughout the research period, I explored multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, for example, considering how different actors discussed issues such as marginalisation or stigma. My findings convey the experiences of actors, including young people, staff and mothers in Pilton, alongside reflexive accounts of my experiences of studying the case, with narratives and situational



descriptions of case activity, personal relationships and group interpretation (Stake, 2008).

As well as conducting a holistic study, opportunities for additional embedded studies to explore particular issues emerged and were taken. For example, as discussed in Chapter Five, I focus on the 'Gang of Four', a group of three young women and one young man whose interactions with each other seem worthy of note, demonstrating the capacity to establish a strong and powerful small network which shields them from unwelcome influences in their environment, but creates dilemmas in moving on to establish new adult identities. In Chapter Nine, I investigate the story of 'The Wall', wherein embedded stigmatising attitudes about young people in Pilton and Muirhouse were thrown into sharp relief by responses to an act of vandalism in a neighbouring, wealthier neighbourhood. In Chapter Ten, I draw extensively on my own diary notes to explore the context of violence that exists in Pilton, including reflecting on some situations when I personally felt at risk when conducting the research.

### **Participant observation**

Since the Chicago school sought to document the 'raw' world as lived and experienced by its subjects (Czarniawski, 2004), qualitative researchers have prioritised approaches such as participant observation to build a cumulative body of empirical work that documents how interaction is put together in real time by participants. The participant observation sessions enabled me to gain some insights that would not have been possible from interviews and focus groups. As Flick (2006) has pointed out, with other research techniques, people are often removed from everyday relations and the style of interaction is formalised. By observing, to some extent, I was able to observe young people's interactions with each other and their responses to me as an outsider. On a small number of occasions, I also witnessed at first hand the sense of violence and threat that many of the

young people described as dominating their daily experience in West Pilton.

### **My position and perspective as the researcher**

Following Stake (2008), my thesis has aimed to convey the experiences of actors and stakeholders in West Pilton as well as providing a reflexive account of my experiences of studying the case. My feelings about the study and about the area were influenced from early on by personal experiences of taking the bus from the centre of Edinburgh into Pilton. I recorded these notes in my diary on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2011:

This city is rich and beautiful. The bus goes past Goldenacre playing fields, with their smell of privilege. I see girls playing hockey against the magnificent backdrop of Edinburgh castle and the skyline of the Old Town. How must West Pilton people feel passing this?

I spent about one hour between 4 and 5pm just walking around the area. It was foggy so in some places I couldn't see much. Muirhouse seems like there's nothing there any more, it's all been knocked down. West Pilton's a mix – it's well-tended in some areas, then there are some streets - West Ferry Drive, Pilton Lea -where the gardens are overgrown and there's debris in the street – a television, old mattresses, I walked in behind some flats to see what was there. It looked like a car park, full of rubbish and a smell of burning. Must have been a Guy Fawkes fire. There was a poignant moment when I spotted children's clothes hanging out to dry in an overgrown, rubbish-strewn garden with a broken fence. Graffiti on the walls and pavement.

Walking back, I passed through a group of young guys with their hoods up. There were maybe five of them, aged around eight to thirteen. The youngest one was throwing stones at the windows of a

flat opposite. I was scared for a minute and I decided it was safest to walk through them. They stopped what they were doing and then resumed.

It's a strange place. There are playing fields with mist hanging over them but no one playing. Such a contrast to the private hockey fields I saw earlier. It's really bounded geographically – you emerge onto one of the roads going round the scheme and it's into another world, brighter, less gloomy.

When conducting fieldwork, it was pointed out to me that 7<sup>th</sup> November was two days after Guy Fawkes Day, 5<sup>th</sup> November, which was a date when there was a historical re-enacting of battles between Piltoners and Muirhousers. What I thought was a car park had in fact been an all-weather football pitch which had been set on fire during the 5<sup>th</sup> November battles.

As Spradley (1980) suggests, as a participant observer I remained conscious throughout the process of the differences between my role and those of the young people and workers. On the few occasions when my role became ambivalent, this influenced my heightened sense of risk. In terms of my approach, I always consciously had dual roles of engaging with people while observing them. Following Spradley (1980), whereas in 'normal' everyday life, the mind might block out things that are not important to the individual, as an observer, I had to try to be explicitly aware of everything that was going on, not filtering so that afterwards I had gathered as much data as possible. I made notes after every session on the bus home, which usually took about an hour. This reflexivity required me to be more introspective than usual, recording not only what I perceived but my own personal thoughts and feelings about what happened. At all times, I tried to have what Spradley (1980) calls a 'wide angle' lens, observing beyond what was closest to me in the room.

## **Gaining access – crossing boundaries**

In MacDonald and Marsh's (2005) study in Teesside, although young people recognised their neighbourhood problems and experienced significant hardships there, familiarity and involvement in strong family and friendship networks might have meant that few considered leaving. In their analysis, these researchers noted that there is a complex relationship between structural constraints and individual agency in shaping youth transitions and that the locality in which poor young people live can be very significant. Young people's identification as 'Piltoners' can give them bonding capital in the local community but it also attracts stigmatised attitudes from outsiders and contributes to their feeling unconfident in exploring the cultural experiences available in the capital city in which they live. Even where they use social media, with a few exceptions, this is usually for gossiping with friends who live nearby than to explore the worldwide web. For unconfident young people, as many of these are, it is safer and more comforting to stay in the proximity of known people and places than to venture across one of the main roads that bound the neighbourhood.

With a consciousness that young Piltoners might also experience these literal and metaphorical boundaries, I knew that I had to venture into their spaces in order to build relationships with them, and initially with 'gatekeepers' such as youth workers, to enable them to trust that they could be open with me and that I would interpret the information they chose to share accurately and with respect and care. I began preparing for the fieldwork in November 2011.

## **Pilton Youth and Children's Project (PYCP)**

I met several times with managers and staff at a local charity called Circle, whom I knew from previous work, who advised me that they did not think that their current working arrangements would make it likely that I would be able to recruit a sufficient number of young people through their agency for

my study. They suggested that Pilton Youth and Children's Project (PYCP) would be more appropriate. They emailed the centre manager, saying that I was undertaking PhD research focussing on 'how young people at risk of social exclusion develop and maintain resilience' and that I was planning to do my fieldwork in Pilton. I said that, if possible, I would like to carry out fieldwork in PYCP and that I would welcome the opportunity to discuss that, see what might be possible and what would be useful. I also explained that I had been reviewing academic literature about young people, social exclusion and resilience and also reviewing Pilton's history and speaking to a few local people, whose names I gave. I explained that I had decided to focus my research in Pilton because I knew the area from my previous work.

## **Recruitment**

Young people were recruited through advertisements on flyers, Appendix Three, that I distributed in PYCP and at Telford College and by using the North Edinburgh News website (<http://nen.press/>, Accessed 14 April 2016). All young people were paid £10 for their participation. However, my sense was that most agreed to meet because they had been persuaded by staff whom they trusted and because they genuinely wanted to tell their stories. The logistics of setting up interviews were such that I often had to do this concurrently with sessions going on, though I was always allocated a quiet room to do the interviews. My role was flexible, and as Bastin (1985) recommends, at different times my active involvement in activities varied. I tended to move around the centre, conscious sometimes that being in the same place all of the time drew more attention to me than I wished to have. Much of the time was spent sitting around, playing pool or table tennis with young people and chatting with staff. Young people tended not to talk very much when they played games with me. However, on one occasion, I played pool with Karen, one of my interviewees, who told me with some pride about her success with her school exams. One member of staff at PYCP, Elaine, who seemed to have a great rapport with young people, took on helping me as a project and she would set up meetings for me, most of which took place at the same time as the drop-in sessions.

As Burgess (1994) suggests, I believe that the observation sessions enabled me to interview more sensitively and to analyse what I was being told both during and after the interviews, with more confidence that I was interpreting meanings the way that they were intended. The trust and familiarity gained by being around in the youth centre may have meant that some young people would have felt more comfortable to share information, especially if they were divulging personal or sensitive details. After the first few interviews, I found it fairly easy to build rapport with most of the interviewees so that, as well as covering the issues I had on my checklist, it felt like we were having a conversation, including exchanging views and having some jokey banter.

### **Ethical considerations**

I had initially decided to focus the research on young people aged 14-16, but this was not fixed. I changed the age range of the young people in the study, initially triggered by constraints laid down by Birkbeck in terms of gaining ethical approval for research with young people aged under 16. The Birkbeck requirement for 12 – 16 year olds would have been to obtain written approval from a young person and their parent/carer. This would have been very difficult to achieve in PYCP. It would also have potentially skewed the research as the parents whose consent would be easiest to obtain might be more likely to be those who conformed most closely to mainstream norms about how to support their children. I wanted to get as good a cross section of young people as possible, including those where parental support for young people's activities might have been lacking.

After a series of discussions with my supervisors, I decided to change to focus on the age range of 16-20, and not only for these bureaucratic reasons. Changing the age range had the advantage of focussing on a significant transition period when young people formally leave school and have to try to negotiate post-school careers which are likely to involve constant change, risk and where the instability can serve to embed social and economic marginalisation and disadvantage (Newburn et al., 2005). My data would be enriched by accounts from people who were going through the practical

transition processes into the labour market, not just preparing for it. Most (21/26) interviewees were aged between 16 and 20 years old, with the oldest person being 23 years of age.

Values are dependent on our beliefs and experiences in everyday life and what we would like our experiences to be. They affect all areas of research. In relation to research he carried out in Southmead, Bristol, Brent (2009) discusses at length what he sees as being the necessity of naming the place rather than carrying out covert investigation to do it justice. He emphasises also the practical impossibility of covering his traces in a local case study. I agreed with this approach, believing that naming Pilton and the Pilton Children and Young People's Project (PYCP) as the location for my research would be ethical and practical. Before commencing the fieldwork, I discussed this at length with PYCP's manager, who agreed with this overt approach. She suggested that 'negative' stories, for example about involvement in crime and drug use, would be likely to be outnumbered by more 'positive' stories about friendships, families and achievements despite adverse circumstances. In writing up and presenting my research findings I have striven to ensure that distress and damage is not caused the participants, or to the wider community in Pilton by, for example, misinterpretation of the conclusions in ways that add to the stigma that people experience. So as to minimise the impact of any distress to participants, before commencing my fieldwork, I made sure that support would be available should anyone appear unduly distressed. All interviewees signed two copies, one for themselves, one for me, of a consent sheet, that included my contact details and those of my supervisor, Appendices Six and Seven. However, I did not experience any significant distress from interviewees. The feedback I had from staff was that the young people reported enjoying the interviews. I continue to have ongoing good relationships with PYCP staff. I do not believe that this would have been possible, had I inadvertently upset young people.

Throughout the field research, including observation sessions, the two meetings with mothers and the interviews, flyers, Appendix Five, were distributed throughout PYCP and displayed on the walls. All staff were briefed that I was undertaking research and the details of this. It was made clear to all research

participants that although every effort would be made to ensure confidentiality and that they would be given pseudonyms, Pilton would be named in the study and it was therefore up to them to decide what they chose to share with me. I aimed to ensure that all interviewees had consented to take part in the research without pressure from myself or anyone else. It was made clear to all participants that they could opt in or out of the discussions. I followed the 'Statement of Ethical Practice for The British Sociological Association' (British Sociological Association, 2002). The Pilton Children and Young People's Project obtained an appropriate Disclosure Scotland check for me before I commenced the fieldwork.

### **Focussing the research questions**

My original research proposal stated its intention as follows:

My research will aim to understand:

- Why some young people in similarly deprived socio-demographic categories face more social exclusion than others
- How to identify and account for resilience factors in young people who would typically be associated with socially exclusionary behaviours but who do not engage in them
- How their expertise might be harnessed so as to promote social inclusion for other 'at risk' young people.'

My planned methods included identifying a list of protective factors for socially disadvantaged young people which I would then investigate with reference to potential outcomes demonstrating resilience or lack of it. I had intended undertaking direct research with a range of families, including those where teenagers had been in contact with the criminal justice system and where there were kinship care arrangements. I had also intended conducting interviews with twenty young people, aged 14-16, two times per year over two years and holding focus groups with young people and peers and families. I had thought that the age range would be appropriate as young people would be preparing to leave school and move into the



labour market. However, the research questions and focus changed, influenced by my review of literature related to youth transitions, social exclusion and resilience, by my initial impressions from some informal discussions with local stakeholders, and also because of the practical constraints imposed by Birkbeck's ethics guidelines.

### **Reviewing the research questions**

Davidson (2009, p.115) argues that research into resilience is acknowledged as being 'an increasingly valuable construct in understanding why some individuals thrive despite traumatic experiences and deprived backgrounds whilst others flounder', but that qualitative methods have largely been neglected to date in studies. In November 2011, I supplied PYCP with the following description of the focus of my research in an email:

I want to find out from young people in Pilton how they define, understand and achieve resilience. I want to explore meanings of 'growing up': What are key moments and experiences? What are the big influences/relationships? How much choice do you have? What destinations are you heading towards? How will you get there and how will you know when you have arrived? I am also specifically interested in exploring the concepts of home, neighbourhood and community, to find out how important Pilton as a place is and how that influences their subjective judgements (and those of other people) and their decision-making.

Based on my experiences and review of the literature, I revised my research questions, to be as follows:

1. How do young people in Pilton experience and manage transitions to adulthood?

2. How do disadvantage, stigma and violence affect the daily lives and transition journeys of young people in Pilton?
3. How useful is the concept of social exclusion to describe young people's experiences in Pilton?
4. How helpful is the concept of resilience to support young people in Pilton?

My analysis would compare the experiences of these young people with other studies of young people, assessing what could be generalised and making recommendations for future research.

### **Getting started**

I arranged a meeting at PYCP on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2011. The manager was enthusiastic about the research. I explained that I would first have to get ethical approval from Birkbeck. At that time, I had been working as a freelance consultant and I had set up a business website, [www.carlinenterprises.co.uk](http://www.carlinenterprises.co.uk). The manager had checked this before our meeting and she seemed to have a sense of my interests and ethical approach. She showed me around the centre, which was larger than I had expected, very lively with a lot of different activities going on. We discussed what services the centre offered and my proposed methods, including confidentiality issues.

The manager told me that she believed that it was important that the study would not be fully anonymised, that people's stories deserved to be told, their voices to be heard. We talked about risks associated with this, for example, if young people gained resilience in this context by engaging in illegal activities, such as violence, drug taking or dealing. The manager's sense was that fighting and violence between young people was getting worse, although she felt that you had to expect some of that in an area like this. However, she also felt that I would also hear stories about

camaraderie with close friends, support from families and people doing 'well' in spite of the odds. The manager said that she felt strongly about giving young people voices. We discussed possible methods. She thought that observing some of the evening drop-in sessions would be useful but that the best way to start the study would be to interview staff to get an idea of the context and to build relationships that would then lead on to being able to interview some young people. Although most of the young people using PYCP would be under sixteen, the manager thought that my target number of around twenty young people was realistic. We agreed that the research plan would be flexible, adapting as learning was gained. She also said that she would speak to her team at their weekly meeting about the research and about what I wanted to do. She invited me to the PYCP Christmas Fair on 9<sup>th</sup> December and I went along. Following this initial meeting, I noted in my research diary that my key themes for interviews and for classifying data would have to focus on individual characteristics and structural issues relevant to themes of resilience, e.g. relationships, social inequality, feelings, assessment, managing, hopeful/optimistic, where you gain information from and how you share information.

Having passed the Birkbeck upgrade process in May 2012, I set off to PYCP on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2012. My intention was to set up arrangements that would be practical and ethical. I was struck by how long it took to get to Pilton on the slow Edinburgh buses, even though it is not so far away from the centre of the city. My field notes from this time make clear that I was trying not to share too much in my interactions with staff. We discussed whether the manager would be part of the research and we decided that she would only be helping and supporting me in setting it up. We therefore agreed that she did not need to sign a Consent form but that I would send her an agreement, based on our discussions. I confirmed the following with her in an email on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2012:

1. I would informally observe/take part in a number of different sessions really as background work before deciding where to do the participant observation work.
2. She would put me in touch with PYCP staff to interview as well as some external staff at Craigroyston High School and Telford College.
3. I would begin to schedule the interviews with the young people once I had been around a bit and become familiar to people, probably in about two to three months.
4. I would draft and forward to her some flyers and a poster advertising what I wanted to do and inviting participation.
5. I would pay the young people interviewees £10 each at the end of the interviews.

### **The fieldwork**

Most of the fieldwork was undertaken over eleven months, mostly at PYCP. Methods included participant observation, semi-structured interviews with staff and young people and a couple of group discussions with some local mothers. The fieldwork consisted of the following:

- Between 15<sup>th</sup> August 2012 and 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2013, I interviewed eight staff who worked with young people - five at PYCP, one at Granton Youth Centre, one at Muirhouse Youth Development Trust, one at Telford College.
- I observed sixteen drop-in evening sessions at PYCP between 19<sup>th</sup> June 2012 and 20<sup>th</sup> March 2013.
- I met with two groups of mothers at PYCP on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2012.
- I held 23 interviews with 26 young people – 20 individual and three paired interviews with 13 young men and 13 young women - between 26<sup>th</sup> November 2012 and 27<sup>th</sup> March 2013. 17 interviews took place at PYCP, three took place at Telford College, one took

place at Granton Youth Centre and two took place at West Pilton Neighbourhood Centre.

- I interviewed a local MSP and also a local councillor on 10<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> April 2013.
- I conducted a follow-up interview with a local youth employment adviser on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2014 to verify what local employment opportunities existed.
- Between 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2011 and 27<sup>th</sup> March 2013, I kept a research diary, which included my observations, feelings and analysis as it was developing.

### **Participant observation**

Since the Chicago school sought to document the 'raw' world as lived and experienced by its subjects (Czarniawski, 2004), qualitative researchers have prioritised approaches such as participant observation to build a cumulative body of empirical work that documents how interaction is put together in real time by participants. The participant observation sessions enabled me to gain some insights that would not have been possible from interviews and focus groups. As Flick (2006) has pointed out, with other research techniques, people are often removed from everyday relations and the style of interaction is formalised. By observing, to some extent, I was able to observe young people's interactions with each other and their responses to me as an outsider. On a small number of occasions, I also witnessed at first hand the sense of violence and threat that many of the young people described as dominating their daily experience in West Pilton.

### **Semi-structured interviews**

According to Denscombe (2010), semi-structured interviews depend on establishing rapport and a good interaction between the interviewer and interviewee. By delaying the interviews with young people at PYCP, until I had become, to some extent, a familiar face, and also by having

interviewed and gained the trust of staff as 'gatekeepers', I believe that I commenced interviews from a position where I was fairly well trusted by most young people. I drew up different interview schedules for staff, Appendix One, and young people, Appendix Two. These were a useful guide and checkpoint. I worked flexibly with the interviewees' styles and ways of communicating, while ensuring that I covered all the key areas. I varied the order of questions and, most of the time, I was able to manage the tone of the interview. Where I judged it appropriate, as recommended by Denscombe (2010), I followed up and opened up new areas for discussion.

As the purpose of the investigation was to gain the perspectives of young people, interviews with different stakeholders had different intentions. The interviews with staff, mostly completed before the youth interviews began, had two main objectives: first was to understand from people who worked with young people what they thought the latter's experiences would be like. The second was to build relationships with gatekeepers so that they would trust me and refer young people on to meet me, hoping that they would communicate to young people that participation in the research would be a safe and worthwhile experience for them. I followed the advice of the PYCP manager in relation to selecting staff to interview. This included youth workers based in the Project, a worker at the local further education college, two careers advisers, two local politicians and a community policeman.

In the course of the fieldwork, a number of new objectives for the staff interviews emerged. For example, at PYCP, I ended up interviewing some additional staff, even after I had been satisfied that I had sampled and learned enough, because staff who had been interviewed had given good feedback about the process so that others whom I had not interviewed were feeling 'left out'.

One of the two politicians interviewed had worked locally as a youth worker and he therefore had a good sense of the experiences of young people,

whereas the other said he had little or no contact with them. I interviewed two employment workers, specifically to learn about what they thought young people's entry into the labour market. The second interview took place several months after the other fieldwork had been collected, the purpose being to verify information about employment opportunities.

Setting up the police interview was challenging. I had arranged a meeting and travelled to meet with a local policewoman but when I arrived there, she told me that her manager had forbidden her to meet with me. In any event, despite her having agreed to the interview, she also told me that she was new to the area and did not think that her insights could add much to my investigation. After that, I twice bumped into Ian, a local community policeman, at PYCP and he agreed that he would meet me. However, he did not respond to email requests to meet. On a third occasion, he happened to be in PYCP and I took advantage of the situation to ask him if he would do an interview with me there and then. He agreed to do so, but said that his time was very limited and that he could not spend more than ten minutes with me. In the end, the interview with Ian lasted thirty-eight minutes and was a very useful source of data, confirming much of what young people said about how authority figures such as the police viewed them and their families and the neighbourhood.

Table 4.2 sets out the details of who was interviewed, when, where and how long the interviews lasted.

**Table 4.2: Summary: The interviews**

	Pseudonym of interviewee	Type	Sex	Date	Venue	Length of interview (minutes)
1.	Antony	Youth worker	Male	15/8/12	PYCP	59
2.	Barbara	Youth worker	Female	16/8/12	PYCP	55
3.	Carol	Link worker	Female	17/8/12	Local college	53
4.	Des	Youth worker	Male	24/8/12	PYCP	67
5.	Elaine	Youth worker	Female	22/10/12	PYCP	86
6.	Andy	Young person	Male	26/11/12	PYCP	32
7.	Bernard	Young person	Male	26/11/12	PYCP	18
8.	Clare	Young person	Female	28/11/12	PYCP	13
9.	Donald	Young person	Male	28/11/12	PYCP	19
10.	Edgar	Young person	Male	28/11/12	PYCP	22
11.	Fiona & Grace	Young people	Both female	5/12/12	PYCP	27
12.	Fay	Youth worker	Female	5/12/12	PYCP	76
13.	Helen	Young person	Female	12/12/12	PYCP	22
14.	Irene and John	Young people	Female and male	12/12/12	PYCP	29
15.	Karen	Young person	Female	14/1/13	GVC	23
16.	Gregor	Youth worker	Male	14/1/13	MYDP	59
17.	Leona	Young person	Female	15/1/13	Local college	62
18.	Mark	Young person	Male	15/1/13	Local college	60
19.	Nora	Young person	Female	18/1/13	Local college	35
20.	Hazel	Youth adviser	Female	22/1/13	GVC	48
21.	Donagh & Patsy	Young people	Both female	30/1/13	PYCP	51
22.	Quinn	Young person	Male	30/1/13	PYCP	23
23.	Rob	Young person	Male	30/1/13	PYCP	21
24.	Steffi	Young person	Female	30/1/13	PYCP	20
25.	Tom	Young person	Male	4/2/13	PYCP	75
26.	Uri	Young person	Male	23/2/13	PYCP	39
27.	Vincent & Willie	Young people	Both male	20/3/13	PYCP	35
28.	Ian	Policeman	Male	23/3/13	PYCP	38
29.	Yvonne	Young person	Female	27/3/13	Pilton Neighbourhood Centre	35
30.	Zara	Young person	Female	27/3/13	Pilton Neighbourhood Centre	55
31.	-	MSP	Male	10/4/13	His office	39
32.	-	Councillor	Male	16/4/13	His office	36
33.	Ivan	Employment adviser	Male	7/5/14	His office	37

## Mothers' group

'Real world' settings provide opportunities and challenges for researchers in terms of methods to use and the implications of these. The two meetings I had with mothers on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2012, highlighted some of these. They lasted 42 minutes and 11 minutes each. I had planned to hold focus groups with mothers who used PYCP for mutual support, to gain advice



and socialise with each other. I had drawn up a guide for the discussions, Appendix Four, but it soon became clear that trying to formalise the discussion would not work. The women were very lively, wanting to talk, cutting across each other, and the group met in the kitchen of the drop in, with small children running around, making lots of noise and interrupting to be lifted. One woman semi-jokingly suggested that the only reason that they came there was for the free food that was provided. I gave everyone a flyer, with contact details, but with the coming and going and lots of activity going on, it was impossible to get people to sign consent forms. However, ethical considerations were respected and maintained. I made clear that the discussion was part of my research and distributed information flyers, Appendix Five. I had no doubt that those who wished to participate in the discussion were doing so and that people were free to opt out if they wished to do so. One person did withdraw. My judgement was that it was better to take advantage of the informality of the occasion than to continue with my more formalised focus group plan. I put my voice recorder in the middle of the group and recorded the discussions. In the end, the session we had was more like a participant observation session where I was playing a more active part than in some other sessions than it was like a conventional focus group.

### **Data gathering**

Data was gathered from a range of sources, including documents, archival records, the fieldwork interviews, focus groups and participant observation. As suggested in the methods literature (Burgess, 1994), I established a research diary to record substantive field notes, with my main observations, conversations and interviews. This provided a chronological description of events, details of informants, conversations and notes of my personal impressions and feelings. I have drawn extensively on my field notes to reflect on the approaches that I have taken and on how my subjective position as the researcher has affected the research and, in turn, been affected by it. How I have gathered data, what I have chosen to record and what I have regarded as important have been influenced by my

own subjective judgement, which has also guided my interpretation of meanings and the connections between various data and types of data. I decided that I could analyse the data sufficiently well, mainly using Microsoft Word though I also used Nvivo software. In the period between December 2010 and January 2011 I spent five days in the Edinburgh Room of the George IV library where I was able to access reference materials, including old newspaper cuttings, which refer to the Pilton area. I also made extensive use of Scottish Government, Edinburgh Council and NHS websites.

I recorded and subsequently transcribed the interviews. I ordered the data from interviews into categories, according to informant type – i.e. staff, young people or politicians. As well as what was said, I made notes about non-verbal communication, meanings of silence and what I was thinking and feeling. I compared and contrasted different informants' perceptions, including my own, to clarify meaning and to support a particular interpretation. According to Walker (1985), such analysis helps to add qualification to research, demonstrating different perspectives and nuances in data. In doing so, it supports my interpretation of the data but this does not imply verification.

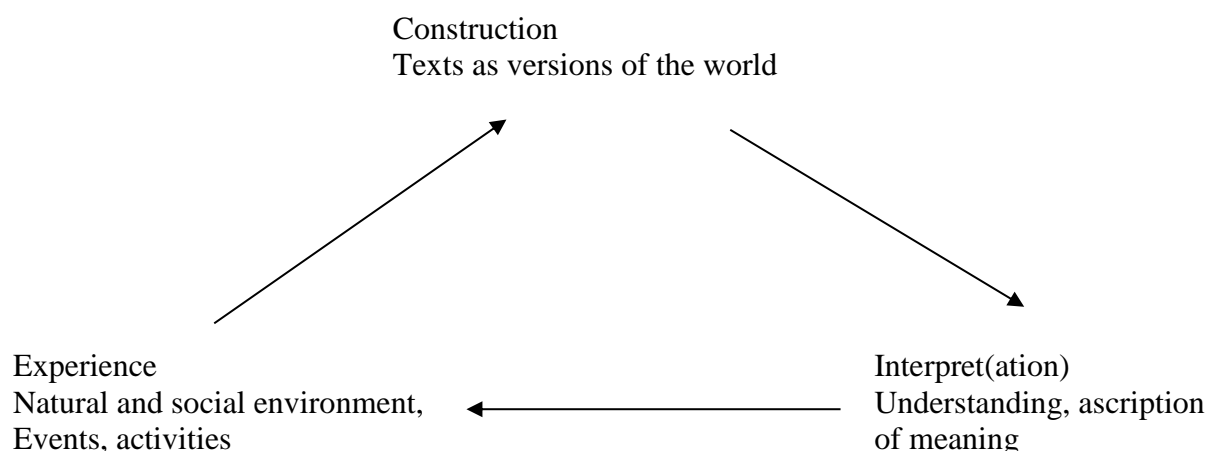
### **Data analysis**

For a research community, case study...gains credibility by thoroughly triangulating the descriptions and interpretations, not just in a single step but continuously throughout the period of study (Stake, 2008, p. 120).

As Bell (2005) indicates, studies such as this do more than just tell a story or give a description; by systematic collection of evidence, the relationship between variables has also been examined in a rigorous analysis. According to Brent (2009), answers do not arise naturally out of the study of material. As well as gathering data from a range of sources, we need a variety of sources and a variety of tools to study them. As proposed by

Denscombe (2010), data was gathered and analysed as an evolving process with collection and analysis happening at the same time; and inductive: working from the particular, for example, feedback in an interview to general, assessing this in relation to broader theories being explored. I have aimed to be as reflexive as possible in understanding how my subjectivity has impacted on the conclusions that I have drawn. I have paid attention to guidance (May, 1993) not to favour quantitative data over qualitative data, nor to dislocate units of data from their meanings, for example by deciding that the number of times a word or phrase appears in texts indicates its relative importance. My analysis draws on broad theoretical perspectives as well as being developed from my analysis of the data which I have collected. Although I have sought to express in meaningful ways what young people tell me, I have at all times consciously and sub-consciously been referencing theory. I have not tried to capture 'objective' reality; rather, I have used a range of methods to represent reality from a range of perspectives, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). In the end, the thesis is my construction based on the dynamic association between experience and interpretation, as laid out in Figure 4.1.

**Figure 4.1 Understanding between Construction and Interpretation  
(Flick, 2006, p.85)**



The research methods have been phenomenological, in the sense that my analysis focusses on subjective reflections by myself as the researcher, based on what I read and observed and on what I was told in interviews. In the course of transcribing and including verbatim accounts in this thesis, I decided that including the language that interviewees themselves used as 'standard' English accounts would be insufficient to capture meanings and feelings that colloquial terms and expressions convey. I have provided a Glossary of 'non-standard' terms and expressions, Appendix Eight.

I recorded and subsequently transcribed the interviews. I ordered the data from interviews into categories, according to informant type – i.e. staff, young people or politicians. As well as what was said, I made notes about non-verbal communication, meanings of silence and what I was thinking and feeling. I compared and contrasted different informants' perceptions, including my own, to clarify meaning and to support a particular interpretation. According to Walker (1985), such analysis helps to add qualification to research, demonstrating different perspectives and nuances in data. In doing so, it supports my interpretation of the data but this does not imply verification.

I established an outline plan for coding interview data before commencing the fieldwork. This had several components. First, I would gather and code data related to the personal characteristics and living arrangements of the interviewees. This meant that I gathered the following data for each interviewee (Figure 4.2):

- Name and pseudonym
- Venue of interview
- Date of interview
- Age
- Gender
- Whether at school or not
- School attended
- Employment status
- Whether or not at college
- Length of time in Pilton
- Family/living arrangements
- Whether or not has used drugs
- Whether or not has used alcohol
- Whether or not has been involved in violent and/or criminal behaviour

**Figure 4.2 Young people's personal characteristics**

Secondly, given that the main aims of the research included examining how useful concepts such as resilience and social exclusion are to describe young people's experiences, I would categorise and code the data that would be gathered, referencing it against main themes in the literature related to these themes, including sub-dividing data where appropriate. This meant that I gathered data related to the sociological theory, the literature that had been reviewed and the research questions, with subheadings under each main theme, as follows (Figure 4.3):

- Networks (Elias, 1978):
  - Informal:
    - Family
      - Immediate
        - Mothers
        - Fathers
        - Siblings
      - Extended
        - Cousins
        - Grandparents
      - Friends
        - Local
        - Outside Pilton
        - Internet-based
      - Formal:
        - School
        - Youth services
        - Colleges
        - Employment advisers
- Inclusion/ exclusion (Smith, 2005):
  - From gaining a livelihood
  - From social services, welfare and security networks
  - From consumer culture
  - From political choice
  - From bases of popular organisation and solidarity
  - From understanding what is happening to society and themselves
  - From shelter
  - From personal interaction
- Resilience (Luthar et al., 2000b):
  - Experiences of significant threat
  - Experiences of serious adversity
  - Optimistic or not
  - Aspirations

**Figure 4.3 Data analysis themes**

I also planned to gather general data that the youth transitions literature seemed to prioritise. I therefore went through my transcribed notes and coded and compared what data could be gathered about the following (Figure 4.4):

- Perceptions of the locality
- Leisure behaviours:
  - Indoor
  - Street-based
  - Drug and alcohol use
  - Sexual behavior
- Attitudes towards/experience of becoming parents
- Experiences and attitudes towards education
- Experiences and attitudes towards employment
- Experiences and attitudes towards youth and voluntary sector youth services

#### **Figure 4.4 Youth transitions data**

In the course of undertaking the interviews, two issues – violence and stigma - came through more forcibly than I had expected at the outset and, given that my intention was to prioritise young people's perspectives, I decided to analyse these separately as important themes, and devoting separate Chapters (Nine and Ten) to these in the final thesis. I coded data therefore as follows (Figure 4.5):

- Fear and experience of violence
- Feelings of being stigmatised
  - As young people
  - As Piltoners

#### **Figure 4.5: Data coded from fieldwork**

I used Word and NVivo software to organise and code my data. My analysis benefited from my having transcribed the interviews myself, so that I was alert to some meanings within the discussions that an external transcriber might not recognise, and by having listened over and over to the recordings. In planning my first draft of the thesis, I drew up the following plan (Figure 4.6) in January 2013:

I will go through a two-stage process, as follows:

1. Key themes that they raise
2. Relate these to key themes re social exclusion, resilience and figurations.

Themes identified so far – note, overarching diversity of experiences even within same cohort:

1. Boundaries – geographical, communicative, authority
2. Awareness and endurance of stigma
3. Violence and antisocial behaviours – relate this to history of the place
4. Becoming invisible
5. Friendships
6. Muckin' about – leisure activities
7. School experiences
8. Work experiences
9. The police
10. Becoming adult
11. Drugs and alcohol
12. Boys and girls – gender relations
13. Family/ies including 'new' and 'old' families
14. Neighbourhood/community
15. Grieving, loss, death
16. Thinking about the future

Conclusions re:

1. Experiences
2. Resilience – if it is a useful concept, what does it mean?
3. Social capital
4. Social exclusion

Recommendations:

1. Further research
2. Employment histories
3. Follow-up
4. Minorities' experiences

#### **Figure 4.6: Data analysis plan, January 2013**

Following observation sessions and interviews, I usually wrote up my notes in my research diary this on the long bus journey home from Pilton – about one hour door to door. Following Blaxter et al. (2002), the diary contains a mixture of observational notes, methodological notes, theoretical notes and analytic memos. It was extremely useful in enabling me to reflect on my experiences throughout the fieldwork period and afterwards. In particular, this has helped me recall in Chapter Ten my experience of some risky, violent situations that occurred.



The thesis was redrafted several times over the period of analysis and writing. My intention has been to organise the data in such a way that the facts are presented accurately, and with a coherent narrative.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter has first of all explored the methodology and the methods employed, I have explained how the case study method has been appropriate to capture subjective and shared experiences of young people in Pilton as they become adults. As well as observing and interviewing young people, I have discussed how interviews with adults who have a responsibility for them, mainly youth workers, both supported the gaining of access to and trust with young people, as well as aiding me as the researcher to prepare and undertake the research and analyse the data gathered.

I have discussed how in a dynamic context such as this, the role of the researcher can vary. At some times, I felt more like an external observer than at other times. I have explained how and why I varied my approach after my preliminary observation sessions and interviews with young people when I felt that my deliberate lack of sharing, the purpose of which was to prioritise the focus on young people's experiences without distortion from my perspectives was preventing the building of rapport.

I have referenced specifically my discussion in Chapter Ten of feeling discomfort, and sometimes fear, occasionally in my observation sessions. However, I would not claim that my sense of being at risk of violence equates with the daily experiences of young people in Pilton. Overall, in reflecting on my experiences, I would assert that the methods employed have been effective in enabling the perspectives of young people to be prioritised. Young people share experiences in their dynamic social networks but each person's experience is also unique. My analysis cannot be taken to describe 'typical' experiences of young people in Pilton, never mind in areas with similar demographics, cultures and history.

Nonetheless, I believe that my methods have been suitable to enable these findings to be compared to other research, so that some conclusions about transition experiences of disadvantaged young people can be hypothesised.

**Introduction**

By exploring how, as in other similar neighbourhoods (Lupton, 2003; MacDonald and Marsh 2005; McDowell, 2003), young people in Pilton invest in and benefit from being part of a range of interconnected and dynamic social networks, this chapter supports the contention of Levitas (2005) that it would be meaningless, as well as unjust to consider them to be 'excluded' from society. I will discuss how long-established and profound 'social interweavings' (Elias, 1978, p.29) provide a sense of belonging, with bonding social capital (Gewirtz et al., 2005) reinforced by shared cultural understandings, which make young people feel protected and which can provide them with a sense of belonging as they begin to shape their adult identities.

I will explore the processes that both stress and support family relationships, emphasising first the existence in Pilton of extended family networks, which can offer support in often challenging circumstances. I will go on to illustrate the importance that many young people place on their relationships with their mothers, who are typically seen as a key source of support and guidance. I will also show how, in line with other research (Holland et al., 2007), brothers and sisters are more often seen as sources of support and guidance than as people who lead young people into criminal behaviours, as was claimed by Ian, a local policeman whom I interviewed.

Having discussed family processes and relationships, I will describe how young people's friendship networks offer support and a shared sense of identity, while at the same time presenting challenges related to the transition to adulthood; for example, some people find emotionally disengaging from previous friendships difficult, while others renegotiate long-term relationships with ease. I will note similarities with the study that McDowell (2003) carried out with young men in Sheffield and Cambridge,

which highlighted that that young people's existence can be considered as bounded in a range of ways.

I will then examine in detail the experiences of a small friendship group, whom I observed closely and interviewed, whom I nicknamed the 'Gang of Four'. Their experiences and perceptions illustrate the support that young people can give each other in challenging circumstances and the dilemmas faced in managing and maintaining these relationships through transition. Social networks in Pilton may be stronger than in other, more advantaged contexts, and I will conclude by challenging the notion that these young people can be regarded as 'excluded' from society.

### **'Bounded' lives**

As in McDowell's (2003) study, the boundaries that young Piltoners experience can be described as geographical, material, cultural and political. *Geographically*, Pilton is located on the edge of Edinburgh but no main roads go through the scheme and there are few reasons to enter it for those who do not reside or work there. The majority of young people in this study lived nearby and spent much of their leisure time at the youth centre and in the streets around there. They describe places that are physically nearby as far away. Some young people, such as Donald, who said, 'I'm just really hoping for a family, hoose, move out ae here anyway', believed that success equated with moving away from Pilton and existing networks but more often people suggested that they retained a strong attachment to their friends and families who were locally based:

I'm gonna stay in Pilton because I don't think I can see myself out of Pilton. I really can't...I dunno. Like, cos I've been here for so long, I just don't think I'd really want to move. Cos it's, I dunno, I feel comfortable around Pilton. I wouldnae want to stay somewhere where I knew naeone.

Helen, 16

Young Piltoners' *material* existence is bounded in the sense that, not having stable employment or wealthy families, their opportunities to travel and to participate in the cultural life of the capital city are limited. Where young people do venture out of the scheme, before long, they will be confronted with evidence of their economic disadvantage when they see the players in the cricket pitches, rugby and hockey fields of Edinburgh's private schools, several of which are located not far from the neighbourhood's boundaries. However, despite my own strong consciousness of this, young people did not describe their perception of what, to me, were obvious material inequalities.

*Cultural* boundaries may be related to the concept of 'social capital', which has been used to describe the differences between the different networks in which young people engage and through which they can gain a sense of 'collective efficacy' with peers, as well as being helped with access to opportunities, education, the labour market (Boeck, 2009).

As discussed in Chapter Six, there was little evidence of consistent engagement by all but a few young people in political activities, although some people had been energised by campaigns, such as that against the planned building of a wall to separate Muirhouse/Pilton from the neighbouring, wealthier area of Silverknowes. Overall, however, the young people could be described as being *politically* bounded, in the sense that their separation from political processes limits their ability to change the structural systems that disadvantage them.

### **Social capital and local lives**

*Bonding* capital relates to the relationships one has with one's immediate family and peers (Gewirtz et al., 2005). *Bridging* capital extends the network, while *linking* capital can provide access to influential others and power structures, potentially assisting with access to opportunities, education, the labour market (Boeck, 2009), bonding social capital (Gewirtz et al., 2005) can both help young Piltoners feel confident and

constrain them, tying them into their local community but making them feel unconfident in exploring social and cultural experiences beyond Pilton.

Similar to my study in Pilton, MacDonald and Marsh's (2005) research in Teesside sought to understand the subjective experiences of young people making the transition to adulthood in a context of disadvantage. In Teesside (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005), although young people recognised their neighbourhood problems and had experienced significant hardships there, familiarity and involvement in strong family and friendship networks meant that few were motivated to leave. Likewise, in Pilton, the environment provides for many, 'a supportive context within which to accomplish the challenges of daily living and which enables human flourishing' (Healey, 2003, p. 69).

### **Shared cultural understandings**

Many studies (for example, Alexander, 2000; Le Grand, 2010; McCulloch et al., 2006) have suggested that young people's style of dress displays their cultural alignment with those around them. This is what Elias (1978, p.137) calls 'the medium of symbols'. For example, Le Grand (2010) carried out a study in a youth centre in London and he describes identity assertion by young people being demonstrated by conspicuous displays of jewellery. Dress is used to signify cultural affiliation in Pilton, but for different reasons. In Pilton, young people's dress is often determined by their concern to remain safe (as well as being constrained by material poverty). From my observations, few people wore jewellery in Pilton. Instead, and rather than being a positive act of choice to display self, most young people described adopting a similar dress to others as a way of not standing out, so as not to become the victim of abuse and violence. In doing so, it was also clear that achieving this required an understanding of the codification of subtle differences in dress, through exhibiting the 'right' trainers or the 'right' sweat pants.

Some young people and staff in Pilton lament that the 'community spirit' that, they assert, used to exist has disappeared. Tom and Zara were both interviewed as young people and they had both also trained as youth workers. For Tom, the redevelopment of parts of Pilton and Muirhouse, including bringing in mixed tenure of housing stock, has changed the 'feel' of the area as he reached his teenage years. He specifically mentioned the breakdown of local communication networks as representative of the decline of 'community':

Cos there was a big community feel where you could go to your neighbour. There wasn't any locked doors. I know a lot of older people talk about this all the time but it was like that cos you knew everyone upstairs, downstairs, across the road. So if you were out, somebody knew where you were the whole time. Whereas towards my later years – adolescence you might say – things like that changed so you didn't know who the neighbours were, didn't know what was going on.

Zara was also unequivocal in stating that there is not as strong a sense of 'community' nowadays as there should be – 'I think that's very lost'. She contrasted this with her memories of childhood when lots of children used to play with each other in an environment where adults made sure that they were safe:

God, there was about twenty in a block, you had landings and you kind of shared. And everybody on the stair, even though there was loads of ye, everybody on the stair knew each other. Ken, we'd all go oot if it had been snowing, we'd all go oot, we'd all build a snowman, ken. Everybody'd be out on the landing and talking tae each other.

However, at odds with such accounts of the contemporary situation, from observation, discussions and interviews, it is clear that a range of longstanding networks, profound and dynamic, thrive in Pilton. Through

these, young people, their families and friends recognise and maintain cultural traditions and norms (Lupton, 2003). This includes codes of behaviour in relation to participation in the 'illegal economy'. For example, although petty thieving might be accepted by some, there are shared understandings, carried through generations, that include not stealing from your 'own kind'. Rules that were described also included that dealers of 'hard' drugs, aware of their potential harms, will not sell them to their immediate neighbours. Oonagh mentioned that she knew that her neighbours sold drugs but that they would decline to sell them to her or her friends:

I speak tae them but like no like for drugs but, like, I know that they sell drugs but they wouldn't give you drugs because it's us as well.

There are also commonly held understandings related to territorial battles that take place between Pilton and neighbouring Muirhouse. Edgar and Bernard are two young men who expressed their acceptance of moral codes, such as that if you were going to have a 'one on one' fight, you would turn up by yourself. Edgar explained that, to remain safe, one requires knowledge of one's combatants and their trustworthiness: 'Ye just need tae hope that people stand by their word'. Bernard described as 'Piltoners' the people who had 'lived in Pilton all their life' and their combative relationship with 'Muirhousers', 'which are people from Muirhouse'. They have a well-established tradition of having pitched battles with each other. These are organised and codified in terms of the engagement and it is noted when these rules are broken. For example, on one occasion, after a series of minor scraps, a large event was organised to sort it out. However, the 'Muirhousers' broke the rules and turned up with more people than they had agreed. The 'Piltoners' were only saved by police intervention:

We're like 'Right, we'll sort somethin' oot like. We'll bring 12, you bring 12.' And we ended up gawn wi', ah think it wis 15 we said, we ended up gawn wi like 15 and we ended up gettin' surrounded wi,



you know, about 60 ae them and then, luckily enough, they had, like all mobbed up, fae the shore, like doon the beach and the polis followed them up. So we got lucky.

The young people from the two neighbouring areas view each other as competitive combatants. Their anger was reserved not for the other young people with whom they battled but for the police, in this instance, their rescuers. Attitudes like this are widespread in Pilton where, with few exemptions, young people regard the police as an oppositional, enemy body, concerned more to harass than to support them.

## **Family**

In a study that included Pilton, Henderson et al. (2007) asked young people about their social networks and the benefits that they felt that they could get from these. Family, mothers in particular, appeared as the most prominent people in their lives. In my study, young people talked a lot about the importance of having supportive families around them and on the whole, they felt that they had this. In this study, with the exception of one person, young people lived with members of their immediate families and just over half (14 out of 26) lived with two parents, i.e., mother, father or stepfather.

More important than family structures, Walsh (2002) and others (Seaman and Sweeting, 2004) emphasise the importance of family processes in supporting young people to build social capital and to thrive. There is ample evidence of this in Pilton. Many young Piltoners described rich experiences of family processes. There were numerous narratives about families where expressions of love, guidance and support characterised relationships and social functioning. Patsy described her pride in her two younger brothers – ‘They’re both, like, really, really brainy’. Mothers described having pride in their children’s achievements. For example, Carly described her elation when her daughter did well at school:

She came home with her Science project and she's got an 'A' for it. I was like 'Oh hoh!' and then she did another project and got good marks from that as well.

Families can also serve to encourage young people to desist from their anti-social behaviours. When Edgar became concerned that he might be interned, he changed his behaviour, citing as the main inspiration the fact that being deprived of his liberty would mean that he would not see his family every day:

Just the thought ae, like, not bein' able tae like, sit down and have something tae eat. Like, and talk tae ma mum and ma brothers.

### **Extended families**

As in other studies in poor neighbourhoods (Lupton, 2003; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005), there is evidence that family life and kin networks can be more vital in Pilton than in other, more affluent neighbourhoods. As well as helping young people feel and be safe, extended families in Pilton provide support, company for socialising and social and cultural capital. Tom grew up in Pilton and he argued that the fact that the neighbourhood was poor had contributed to strengthening extended family networks:

I think a lot of families stick together down here. And considering the fact that you can't get a house in many places in town, if you can get a house down here, quite a lot of them are all council. They're gonna stay because it's gonna be cheap rent as well and you know everybody so in terms of, if you've got kids, family care arrangements and stuff.

From young people's accounts, it seems that many families in Pilton have a range of health-related problems. The support from extended families is important for supporting children in such challenging contexts. There were hints throughout interviews of managing long-term chronic illnesses,

dealing with drug and alcohol problems and children having to take on caring responsibilities at a young age. There was strong evidence of what Smith and Carlson (1997) describe as the adaptation and extension of family structures to cope with such challenges. In line with Smith and Carlson's (1997) assertions, childcare responsibilities were often spread across multiple individuals and extended families. Antony, a youth worker, noted that in Pilton, more than anywhere else he had worked or lived, extended families 'identify themselves as family groups' and they move in to support each other, especially in times of duress:

They often share sort of parental responsibilities. There's quite a lot of cases of, like, grandparents looking after grandchildren, aunts and uncles looking after nieces and nephews, people taking children in who have, maybe orphaned or, you know, the parents are sort of incapable of doing the parental role so I can think of numerous families that are large and extended and quite often matriarchal.

Tom had recently moved out of his family home to co-habit with his girlfriend. He described his family as consisting of a brother and sister, his mother and father and an extended family of 'eight aunties and uncles on my mum's side and two aunties on my dad's side who I see quite regularly'. Although he had moved to a neighbouring, more affluent district, being close to his extended family remained very important for him. He described the convenience of having so many family members living nearby, mainly for social support and company:

We all live, most of us, within about a mile of each other... It's useful. Like in case you want to go and see anyone and do things, you can do a lot of it in one day because you can obviously go from one place to the next. My mum and dad just recently moved up to [Name of neighbouring area], but they've moved closer to my Nana. They're now a stone's throw away. They walk a hundred yards round the corner and that's to my Nana. So he spends all his time

round there. So if I wanted to go and visit my mum and dad, I just pop in to my Nana's cos they're generally there. So it's a better feel because you know where everyone is. It's easier to find people cos like I would pop round to one auntie or uncle and say 'I'm looking for my old man, where is he?' and it's 'He's round at your Nana's, they're doing tea'.

There is a substantial minority of single parent (usually mothers) households in Pilton (Scotland's census, 2016). In such a context, McDermott and Graham (2005, p. 73) argue that kin relations can be 'safe spaces, usually free of the stigmatization and surveillance' that young, single mothers experience across other social sites. They also argue that, with the support of extended family, young mothers are able to develop themselves as 'good mothers', by mothering practices that are made possible, partially through family support. Single mothers can be forced to look outwards, to establish social networks, including links with parents of their children's friends (Seaman and Sweeting, 2004).

The death of a parent is a traumatic situation for a young person. In circumstances like this, having a strong, extended family can be vitally important for a young person. Helen's mother had died two years earlier. With her father absent, her aunt took over caring responsibilities, including laying down acceptable codes of behaviour and pressing her to find a job:

She wants me tae, like, well obviously she wants me tae dae well. Like, say ah couldnae get a job, she'd want me tae try and apply for a next course up in child care and stuff like that.

Helen feels loved and secure in her relationship with her aunt. She told me, 'I have a strong bond wi' her. I can trust her. And she keeps me balanced'. Just as in Elias and Scotsman's Winston Parva in the 1960s (Elias and Scotson, 1994), young people in Pilton who have an established family network, with a history of belonging to the place, seem to have less fear of danger, as well as less experience of assaults. As elsewhere

(Parkes and Conolly, 2011b), the protective processes of having strong local networks were stressed more in interviews with young people than by staff. Patsy said, 'I've always felt safe here. But I have a member of my family on every corner'. This clearly brings personal benefits in terms of keeping physically safe, though such comments were couched within an acceptance of danger and violence as community norms that could not be changed. For example, Patsy, pressed to give an example of how neighbours and family 'look out' for each other, said:

Like, someone trying to break into my house and all the neighbours are there for each other, if you know what I mean. They all speak, so they can all warn each other and stuff like that and because we're all from here me and all my friends are all close by so we've all got each other and our mums and that now know each other so they're all friends because we've been friends for years. So it's advantages like that as well.

### **Parents, mothers in particular**

The relationship between parents and children is a constantly evolving process (Wyman et al., 1999) and the move into adulthood has been described as a move to interdependence, rather than independence (Lahelma and Gordon, 2003). Few young Piltoners discussed their relationships with their fathers. In contrast, with a few exceptions, mothers were described as trusted sources of support and advice throughout and beyond the transition to adulthood. As in other studies of family relationships (Seaman et al., 2005), while parents and young people both recognised the need for rules of behaviour, the negotiation around these caused disagreements. Parkes and Conolly (2011a) describe how young people often talk about negotiating bounded autonomy with parents, e.g. by coming in at an agreed time, keeping in touch by phone. Such 'patterned and predictable' rules to govern family life (Walsh, 1998, p. 47) can provide security and stability. Thus, one young Piltoner, Uri,

appreciated that by discipline and rules being laid down in the home context, he learned to stay out of trouble in the outside world:

They have been strict wi' me. If I had, if I came back and brought the polis back I would probably have got a slap, ken what I mean.

As well as offering advice, support and guidance, there is often a lot of humour and enjoyment in familial relationships. For example, Patsy and Oonagh described with some joy the minor power battles they had with their mothers:

Patsy: We were 16 and we had tae be, aye well we were like 16 and we had tae be in for, like, ten or eleven o'clock. Cos when ye turn 16, ye're like 'mum, ye cannae ground me, ah'm 16 and ah'm stayin' out tae whatever time ah want'. So ah came hame for, like, eleven, half eleven and Oonagh had tae be in for, like, 8 o'clock. So she, like, ran away.

Oonagh: For, like, 2 hours. I done that. Ah ran away. And ah said tae ma mum, 'Did naebody come looking for me? Ah ran away.' She went 'Ah didnae even notice.' She's always been stricter on me, always because I was her oldest and like. She's chucked me out once before tae go to my dad's, told me to leave. But I packed my bags when she was there and she's going 'Where are you going?' and I'm like 'My dad's' and she's 'No, ye're no'. And I'm like 'Ye just told me tae leave'. Ah cannae remember what that one was about?

As well as mothers supporting their children, young people can also offer support to their mothers. For example, one young man, Xander, described his sense of responsibility towards his mother in their evolving relationship. He felt that he had a responsibility to make his mother feel happy and secure, by letting her know that he was doing well:

I talk tae my, like, my mum's, she's no got any daughters so it's all

sons, it's all males. So I try and kindae cross that boundary wi' my mum in a way...a mother and a daughter would talk about certain things, whereas I would, I dinnae talk about the same things as my mum but I let her know in a way that if she says tae me, ye ken, basically, 'Are ye being safe?' in a way and my mum gets tae ken that, like, aye, so she stops worrying.

According to the 2011 census (Scotland's census, 2016), around 17% of households in Pilton are headed by a lone parent, usually a mother. Some young people described their mothers' experiences as single mothers, including the challenges they had faced. Zara felt that she had a really close relationship with her mother but she appreciated the economic struggles that her mother must have had and the efforts she had made to support and bring her up:

Now that I'm mair grown up and I can see obviously, like, the wages come in and then ye've got rent and you've got council tax and you've got all these things to pay. And then you've got your shopping to get and then obviously, you still want stuff. Like kids that are younger, my brother is younger so he is still wanting things and he still needs clothes and stuff, he's no earning a wage tae pay hissel' so, aye, ah do, ah think it maybe is a but ah think that probably it can be quite hard for two parents as well but probably just a wee bit more strenuous on single parents.

## **Brothers and Sisters**

Holland et al. (2007) have conducted one of the few studies that examines the influence of siblings in transition on each other. They indicate that siblings are important in providing individual support as well as bridges to other networks, including friendships with other young people. Brothers and sisters can also be useful in a pressured context in supporting younger siblings to withstand conflict (Gillies and Lucey, 2006). Some young people in Pilton suggested that having older brothers and sisters helps them feel

safe. Others described how they act to protect their younger siblings. Many young people talked about looking up to older siblings, who offered them guidance and support, and being proud of and caring for younger siblings. Patsy, for example, glowed with pride when she described her twin younger brothers, boasting of her aspiration for them to achieve in the educational system and her confidence that they would manage that:

One of them's got his mind set on, he wants to be a lawyer and he will dae it. Like without a doubt, he'll go through University and do it.

As with parents, the relationships between siblings change over time and have to be constantly negotiated. Mark's relationship with his younger brother was very protective. This was undoubtedly influenced by the fact that they were immigrants and a black family in an overwhelmingly white neighbourhood, where Mark himself had experienced several incidents of racial aggression. He described his younger brother as 'immature'. He also reflected on the fact that their relationship was changing and that he would have to modify his own behaviour as his brother was becoming more grown-up and independent:

I've been learning that he's kind of, he's growing up. You know, like, always, like, these past few years, I've been thinking about this a week ago or so, I'm thinking, you know, he's just growing up in such a short period. All this time he was really, really immature. In these past, maybe, six to eight months, I've noticed a big change...it just brings, it's kind of, now I have to look out less for him. You know, like, prior to me noticing that he's growing up, I had to check, like, pretty much everything that he's doing. That he's not, like, losing his way and stuff like that. But now it's kind of – it's very, very good.

Steffi described both the criminal behaviour of her older brother and her own caring responsibilities for her younger brother. Re – the older brother:

He used tae get in a big lot of trouble. Before he had his own flat



and stuff and got kicked out of the house and stuff. And the polis used tae come. The police used tae come every weekend and take him away and stuff like that...he was smashing my mum's house up.

For her younger brother, Steffi took on a caring role that include that she would 'make sure he gets up for high school in the morning. Take him to school with me'.

Some adults, including Ian, a local community policeman, suggested that older brothers in particular could be bad examples to their siblings. However, this was only borne out in a small number of interviews when young people alluded to drug use and criminal behaviours of older siblings and the impact that this had on their home lives. However, no young person suggested that they were influenced to use drugs or to take part in criminal behaviours by their siblings' examples.

## **Friends**

Barry (2010, p. 126) notes that, for young people in situations of instability or family breakdown, friends can form a 'crucial social network'. Many young people in Pilton discussed the importance of friendships; being part of a group that had established trust norms and networks (Adger, 2000). This contributes to people's sense of well-being, as well as to their sense of feeling safe. Young people in Pilton are bound together by what Elias (1978) would call their 'I' and 'We' consciousness; their identities and social functioning are defined in relation to others, in this instance, their peers. Karen described her friendship networks as important in providing mutual support. Like other young people, she described some friendships as transitory and others as more permanent. With the latter, behaviours were mutually reviewed and adapted as young people moved into adulthood.

I've lived here for eighteen and a half year now. So I've got a lot of friends. I've ones that I dinnae speak tae any mair. Ones that I still

do. But the good thing about it is we do stick together, we do look out for each other, we help each other out. Ken, if we need it, we need it. If we dinnae, we dinnae but that I would say is the main good things about this area. Especially when the sun comes out, everybody they come together.

Some young people actively manage different friends in a range of contexts and they explore and select suitable identities for different situations. Young people's awareness of differences between the diverse situations varies. For Helen, who was attending college outside the neighbourhood, there was little difference in the nature of the relationships that she had with her student friends and her friends in Pilton. On the other hand, Donald, who was going to Broughton High School, also outside the neighbourhood, described behaving differently at school and with his Pilton-based friends. He cited class and socio-economic factors as significant in influencing this:

Well a lot ae ma pals fae school urnae from this area at aw. They're aw pals fae, like, the West End, Stockbridge<sup>4</sup>, all that...it's completely different. The people that I speak to up there, like at Broughton, when I come home, it's like completely, like, black and white, completely different.

Young people's friendship networks can include many people; one young man told me that he had around thirty-five close friends, whom he saw frequently. Friendship networks vary in composition; some are male or female only; others are mixed. From observation, it was clear that some of the male-female behaviours include sexual flirtation but there are also male-female friendships that are not based on this. Donald explained this: 'Sometimes ye can knock about wi' a group ae lassies, a couple ae us will go out wi' them but sometimes it's just general pals, yeah'. It seems that companionship and the gaining of the social capital and the feeling of safety that having friends brings is valued and that gender differences, at

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<sup>4</sup> Two wealthier neighbourhoods of Edinburgh.

least for some, have little impact on this.

### **Mini Case Study: The 'Gang of Four'**

This section draws on observation and two paired interviews with Fiona, Grace, John and Irene, whom I nicknamed the 'Gang of Four' and who provided an interesting mini case study about friendships and transitions. In this neighbourhood, young people employ a range of strategies to enable them to feel and to be safe. In line with other studies which discuss friendship groups (for example, Barry 2010), for these young people, friends constituted a crucial social network. The 'Gang of Four' present a model of four young people pooling personal resources to make sense of the challenges they face and to support each other in facing them. However, their loyalty to each other sometimes felt like it might inhibit them from performing some of the changes in behaviour that would be necessary for them to 'become' adults

I noticed the 'Gang of Four' on several occasions when I was doing my observations in PYCP. At their request, I interviewed them in pairs – Fiona and Grace first, then John and Irene. In the interviews, although they had timid mannerisms, for example, mumbling and talking behind their hands, giggling to each other, they were also assertive, used each other for support and backed each other up. In the very loud, rumbustious context of the drop-in service, they seemed to me physically to be very close to each other, quiet and peaceful. Either with a youth worker or on their own, they engaged in handicraft or art activities, undisturbed by what was going on around them. Aside from their behaviours, I noticed them because of other people's responses to them; in the chaotic surroundings, when other young people were shouting at each other, physically interacting, sometimes in abusive and threatening manners, they were left alone to carry on their small group activities.

Frosh et al. (2002) have observed that in working class communities, boys tend to maintain their difference from girls, and so avoid doing anything

that is seen as the kind of thing girls do. At odds with this, John's public presentation was without the macho, 'hard' behaviours that other young men constantly performed. He seemed happy to be playing with the young women and taking part in activities such as helping them paint their nails. John openly identified as a gay man, although Irene asserted that he performed in 'acceptable' ways, without what they regarded as unacceptable 'campness'. Thus, according to Irene, 'everybody likes him'. It has been suggested that homophobia is ubiquitous in working class communities (Frosh et al., 2002), although some recent writers (McCormack, 2014), have referred to the demise of such attitudes. Several staff and one young person suggested that homophobia was no longer a problem in Pilton but I heard terms like 'faggot' and 'poof' being bandied about fairly casually in some young people's conversations. This was at odds with PYCP's rules about respecting difference, including different sexualities, and I heard staff challenge homophobic comments and attitudes from young people many times. It seemed brave for this young man to be so 'out' in this context.

The 'Gang of Four' described how they had come together and become close. John is related to Grace and he had introduced the young women to each other. They had gone through a conscious stage of reducing their social networks so that the four of them had become a discrete group, sharing similar values, though these were often at odds with those in their wider environment:

Fiona: Knowing that they're no intae the stuff that other people are intae. So you know there is people out there that you can be pals wi' that are no gonnae be like that.

The 'Gang' actively protected each other and kept their network as exclusive as they could, in a context where they have had experiences of feeling physically threatened and where within and beyond their families, issues such as drug use have been very present:

Me: So, apart from you two, you hang out with another two people.  
Do you have a wider range of friends?

Fiona: No really, it's only us, ae.

Me: And have you decided that? Have you decided that you're going to hang out in that small group or did it happen?

Grace: We prefer it. We did used tae muck aboot in a big group but then we aw just went separate ways.

Fiona: We aw separated. And we, us four, just stuck thegither.

The 'Gang' had an agreement that they could breach each other's confidentiality to get advice from a trusted adult, if necessary:

John: We can share stuff with each other and we know that they willnae go back and say tae people.

Irene: And it's, like, we all look efter each other as well.

John: Aye.

Me: Yeah? In what way?

Irene: Like, I dunno, like, just like, anything. Like if we think like they're daein' somethin that's no right, we go in and, like, tell someone else that would be able to control it.

Me: What, like you tell other people about your friends?

Irene: Aye, but only if it's serious.

Me: Like what? So if they were getting into trouble with the police or something?

Irene: Aye.

Me: So how would you do that and look after them and keep your friendships?

Irene: Cos it wouldnae bother us. Cos we're aw connected.

Me: Would people always thank you for that?

Irene: Depends what would happen.

Me: Have you got an example?

Irene: Like, if we were drinking and, like, people fainted or something, we would obviously go get someone - that's never happened but, like, that's just an example.

In their discussions with each other, as well as with trusted youth workers, the 'Gang of Four' moved back and forward from discussing problems and issues to having fun. For example, they talked about an upcoming trip to Liverpool and why they wanted to go to see the Slave Museum. They had heard about how sad the history of the dock was and that nine million people had left there to go to America. All agreed how difficult it was to imagine their poverty. That then moved on, with huge hilarity, to discussing how big their suitcases would be and reminiscing about one time when they could-not get them onto a minibus, especially after stopping off to shop at Primark. Their conversations also included a lot of sexual innuendo and laughing, indicating exploration of adult themes, albeit with some embarrassment. The transitions they were negotiating created dilemmas. How would they move on to more adult, 'responsible' pastimes and retain the safety that the Group gave them? John was the only one who was working and he now came to PYCP less often than the others but he felt guilty about that. This might mean moving away from PYCP, people they cared about, who cared about them and into a more risky, possibly less caring, adult world. It took them into risky situations, reminiscent of their childhoods, which had included significant challenges, including problematic drug use in their families:

Grace: We're still going through part of our childhood cos we missed out quite a bit...

Fiona: Aye.

Grace: Cos we never really went out that much cos we were helpin' oot. But then, like, we're older now.

Agency can be understood as a strategic seizure of opportunities which arise for individuals and groups (Van Krieken, 1998). However, although these young people individually and collectively have agency, their individual outcomes remained uncertain. Irene's mother had died about six months before I interviewed her. Irene was two months pregnant and was not living with the father (Rob, also included in this study). Neither she nor Rob seemed to have clear plans about how they would manage or what

their living arrangements would be when the baby came. John was the only one of the four who was clearly making the transition into a workplace situation. He talked enthusiastically about the opportunities for training and advancement that he felt he was receiving, but he then hesitated as though he were aware that his experiences were eclipsing those of Irene, sitting beside him:

Well it takes a year for your SVQ Level 2. It takes 3 years altogether to do your SVQ Level 1, I've done that. And you do your SVQ Level 2. And you can dae a mair - like a, ah dinnae ken what it's called - it's mair for, like, hair-ups and wedding hairs and stuff like that. Ye can dae yer Level 3 for that. But ah'm gettin' trained in a salon so ah dinnae dae it at college. Ah'm just daein' that and by May next year, by the end of summer next year, I'll be qualified.

John was training at a salon which was in the local area. Despite not having moved far away in geographical terms, his new work experiences seemed to make him feel very conflicted about moving on from his previous leisure pursuits at PYCP. Not only did he have less time to play with friends; he was learning different, more adult, ways of behaving in the adult context.

Having opted not to take part in 'adult' pursuits such as drug taking or drinking harmfully, as they saw others do, not wanting to 'get involved in what you've seen', left Grace and Fiona to feel that there was 'nothing really for us to do'. They described a very close bond with the youth worker, Elaine, and both volunteered at PYCP. However, their anxiety made them nervous in new, 'adult' contexts. In the leisure context, both said that they did not like 'goin' up town an' that'. Neither was currently working. Grace had spent a short time studying hairdressing at college but had dropped out – 'When ah went tae dae it, ah couldnae dae it, it was too hard'. It sounded like the new social context had been as challenging for her as the course. She had lost confidence very quickly and her narrative to describe the experience had become that she had only taken up

hairdressing as her friends had been training as hairdressers. At one point of the interview, both Grace and Fiona expressed aspirations to train as nannies and to 'travel the world'. For now though, these seemed like dreams, rather than plans. Later in the interview, Fiona said that she wanted peace but was wary about moving too far away from Pilton – 'Ah wouldnae want tae go far but just oota the area, like quiet. No-one tae stir things up.' Grace also said that she would not want, 'tae move far away far, like away from ma family and that'. Like many young mothers-to-be, Irene said she was not sure if she was confident about becoming a mother, although it would make 'a big difference'. One outcome was certain – that she would have her baby, which would force her to become the adult that she felt that she was possibly not yet qualified to be.

After my final meeting with the 'Gang of Four', I followed them and others into PYCP's drama hall where a Christmas performance was taking place. On stage there were a few girls singing. The 'Gang of Four' and others were wearing fancy dress and having a lot of fun, including one who was dressed as a banana. They looked away shyly when they caught my eye, as though they wanted to make this period of innocent fun last just a little longer.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter has explored the social networks, including families and friends, through which young people move in their daily lives in Pilton, providing practical support on a daily basis, as well as a sense of history grounded in this place. There is strong evidence to support the thesis that social bonds with families and friends are stronger in communities like Pilton than in many other communities (Lupton, 2003).

It is clear that young people have strong, wide ranging and dynamic networks which are mainly located within the Pilton neighbourhood and its surroundings, although some young people venture further in their leisure, work and further education contexts. Engagement in dynamic networks



influences young Piltoners' transition experiences. These include important relationships with mothers and, for some, with siblings, and also with friends. Friendship networks, as, for example, with the 'Gang of Four', are sometimes chosen and maintained so that young people can provide mutual support to each other in challenging circumstances. As childhood identities are replaced by adult ones, realignments of friendships and new responsibilities mean that young people have to extend and build new support networks. The bonding capital that provides feelings of security and belonging also has the potential for some young people to inhibit the bridging capital that enables them to explore new ventures beyond Pilton.

The 'Gang of Four' provides a model of young people exhibiting personal agency as individuals and collectively, so as to give and receive support and to manage risk in a context where there are many threats, emotional and physical. However, as with other young people, the transition to adulthood renders the friendship bonds of these for young people fragile, and other life events, such as finding work and becoming a parent, will mean that they have to renegotiate their relationships, and possibly disengage from each other. Nonetheless, the evidence from their and other's accounts and experiences is that there is a rich social life in Pilton. This is society. While young people here are poor and disadvantaged in many ways, the thriving social networks that exist here disavow any suggestion that young Piltoners can be labelled as 'socially excluded'.

## **Chapter Six: Becoming adult**

### **Introduction**

This chapter discusses how young people in Pilton define and mark the transition to adulthood. For a range of reasons, young people can be ambivalent about what 'becoming adult' means. It can be marked by what Cote and Bynner (2008) call 'social' markers of becoming adult, such as becoming a parent, finding employment and leaving the parental home, and 'behavioural' markers, such as accepting responsibility for one's own actions and making independent decisions, including ceasing leisure activities that included fighting and vandalism. There is a constant interplay between the social and the behavioural and this chapter will discuss how young people in Pilton validate their achievements against how they believe external actors – family and friends, work colleagues, the state and public services – view them.

I will consider young people's relationship (or lack of it) with formal political processes, which could be regarded as a specific marker of becoming adult, and, for some scholars (for example, Smith 2005) as an indicator of social inclusion. I will suggest that lack of consistent engagement with formal politics denotes marginalisation from mainstream politics, but that their actions in relation to specific campaigns show that they will engage, where they feel they can make a difference. In such contexts, the idea of 'youth as the future' can be used as a powerful campaigning tool to effect change in an adult political context.

### **Adult too soon?**

For many young people in Pilton, the arrival of adulthood is tinged with regret and a sense of loss. The future seems full of responsibilities and many people gave the impression that they felt that adulthood had come too soon, though their reasons for this vary. For example, John regretted the sense that carefree fun was being relegated to the past and he was

torn between his genuine enjoyment of the new 'adult' world of work (as a trainee in a hair salon) and 'having a laugh' with his friends:

Ah huv ma childish moments but when I'm at work and stuff, ah'm like, ah feel mair ae an adult. But when ah'm roon ma pals an that, ah can be mair, younger. Like, act younger, ye dinnae need tae act responsible.

Grace's regrets at leaving the world of childhood were very different; she described how problems in her family, including sickness and drug and alcohol issues, had meant that she had had to take on caring responsibilities at a young age and consequently she felt that she had missed out on a carefree childhood. She wanted to remain a child to some extent so as to have the experiences that she felt had been denied her:

Because ah've never really lived a childhood that much... Ah think there's more childhood to come because I really huvnae had one.

However, not all young people regard the move into adulthood with a sense of loss. Leona, for example, was excited by the changes she was experiencing and anticipating what lay ahead. She described how her relationship with a close friend changed as they both moved into employment. She conceptualised this as a realignment of management arrangements for the friendship, rather than a break with the past:

Wi' jobs, shifts change so we do see each other but just not quite, it's not like teenage best friends. It works like adult best friends now.

### **Social and behavioural markers of adulthood**

Some studies have suggested that the reasons that young people can be ambivalent about becoming adult can be related to what has been termed, their 'yo-yo' lives (European Group for Integrated Social Research, 2001; Molgat, 2007; Wyn and White, 1997), whereby they might for example,

move out from their parents' home and then return and leave several times. In terms of 'social' markers, such as getting a job or their own home, for many young people in Pilton, the 'yo-yo' has yet to go up. As I will go on to describe, as yet, the social markers that they describe as signifying achievement of adulthood bear little relationship to their own lived experiences. Even where 'social' markers of adulthood were clearly evident, some young people were unsure about whether they had yet reached the stage where they would confidently describe themselves as 'adult' or whether they wanted to do so. Although all of these young people were over sixteen, only one person, Tom, had left the home of a parent or other family carer to co-habit with a partner. Tom had been to University, was currently employed and lived with his girlfriend, just outside the neighbourhood. However, he still felt that he wasn't ready 'to grow up yet...not ready for kids, not quite ready for a mortgage yet, that sort of aspect. More grown up stuff'.

For some young people, acknowledgement by self and others of having attained 'social' markers of adulthood influenced their behaviours, which then provided more evidence of adult identity. Thus, leisure live activities such as drinking alcohol and having sex were specifically cited by several young people as providing social markers evidencing adulthood and encouraging 'adult' behaviours. The opportunity to socialise in adult bars and nightclubs (including before the age of 18) was experienced as a significant social marker of transition to adulthood for Oonagh and Patsy. As a consequence, they indicated that they needed to adjust their behaviour in these new spaces where 'running crazy' could be construed as immature behaviour, 'like children'. Leona emphasised more strongly that she had become aware of assuming an adult social identity around the time when she bought a car and got a 'proper' job in a bar:

I got my first car in 2011 in May. I got my 1<sup>st</sup> proper job in 2011 in July. And I think it was, I think it was that year, it was about, some point that year, when I was working at the King James pub.

Having noted these social markers of adult identity, Leona went on to discuss how changes in her leisure activities through establishing new friendship groups in pubs and clubs in the centre of the city meant that the social markers of her adult identity were reinforced and confirmed by behavioural markers, i.e. drinking in adult contexts.

Unlike Leona, most of the young people in this study had not had such validation of their identity by consumerist 'social' markers, such as finding a job or buying a car. For them, behavioural markers were, as in Cote and Bynner's study (2008), increasingly important, potentially filling the spaces vacated by the lack of opportunities to achieve in externally validated 'social' terms. Thus, many young people described changing behaviours such as ceasing to be involved in street-based leisure activities, moving out of friendship groups involved in petty acts of vandalism and violence, stopping going to the youth club, being more 'responsible' in attitudes and motivation in relation to finding a job and taking more care than previously in one's sexual behaviour. Throughout the study there were repeated descriptions of how people would become involved in anti-social, including violent, behaviours from around the age of 12 to 16 and then, realising that they were moving into adulthood, they would decide that they had to be more organised. However, even these changes were sometimes resented as an unavoidable part of growing up. Vincent, for example, described moving out of riotous and fun group behaviours into adult responsibilities that were troubling:

Like, actually getting ready to go out tae have a laugh wi' your friends. Meeting up somewhere. Going away. Going daein' something. Fannyin' about. Smashin' windows, do this, do that...Maturity means getting up, looking after your girlfriend, making sure she's alright, looking respectable, looking after your mum and dad and making sure they're alright.

While young people consistently expressed the view that they could exercise a strong degree of agency in selecting and managing their social

relations, they were also critical about what they regarded as the failure of others to take responsibility for their decisions. These attitudes surfaced frequently in discussions about sexual behaviours and parenthood. A few people suggested that some young women actively chose to become pregnant to get a house and benefits but a more common view was that some young people passively and accidentally drifted into parenthood. This appeared to have been the case with two young women, Karen and Irene, who were pregnant at the time of the study. Neither seemed to have intended becoming pregnant and they were vague about planning for their child's care. Neither was living with the father. Irene described her feelings about becoming a mother in terms reminiscent of Turner's study (Turner, 2004), which found that young women believed that teenage motherhood could limit a young woman's freedom, curtail relationship prospects and require her to mature emotionally. As with other studies that discuss young people's identity construction (for example, Catan, 2004; Newburn et al., 2005), young people can feel adult in one sense but not in another. Irene said that she doubted whether she was an adult as there were experiences that you needed to be an adult in order to manage, such as becoming a parent:

Me: You're not sure if you're an adult?

Irene: Nuh.

Me: So how will you know when you are?

Irene: Dunno. Like there's like things that, like, ye need tae, like, be an adult for.

Me: Like what?

Irene: Dunno. Like, if ye're gonnae have a bairn, ye need tae be an adult.

Me: So do you want to have children?

Irene: Eh, ah'm pregnant.

As someone describing a stronger sense of self-empowerment than these, Xander decried what he regarded as others' irresponsibility and was very clear that he himself possessed the decision-making power to conform to

the social norms that he respected, which included delaying fatherhood until he could be in a position to provide properly for a child and partner:

See nowadays, thirteen, fourteen, they're having bairns and having kids and that. I don't know how, so when they're fourteen, when they're only twenty-eight, their kid's goin' tae be their age and they have their kid, if they have it at fourteen, they're gonnae be twenty-eight, not even hitting thirty yet and they're a granny.

Most often, there was more than one marker that indicated the move into adulthood, with events in one sphere influencing decision-making in other spheres. For example, for some young men and women, beginning to be sexually active involved risks of unplanned pregnancies, which were accepted in a fatalistic fashion. For Willie, the fact that many of his friends were having babies made him realise that this was not the future that he wanted. The behaviour change that symbolised his exercise of agency so as to avoid the inevitable fate of others in becoming an unplanned father included actions in relation to finding paid work:

A couple, one had a kid, two had a kid, three had a kid. They were dropping like flies. And I was like, 'Oh, this isn't for me. I was like, ye got to go and do my own thing, find myself some work.

## **Political engagement**

Engagement in formal political processes can be regarded as a marker of both social inclusion (Smith, 2005) and becoming adult. Smith (2005) suggests that social inclusion can be marked by one's ability to exercise political choice, to have power in bases of popular organisation and solidarity and to understand what is happening to society and oneself. In Pilton, there was little evidence of consistent engagement with political processes by young people. Nobody suggested personal identification with a political party. Where young people thought that they might make a difference, at least a few were politically active. The symbol of youth as the

future can be used as a political campaigning tool. For example, some young people were actively engaged with the local Youth Forum, which covers the larger Forth area and reports into Edinburgh City Council on matters which it identifies as important to young people. However, the Forum was only mentioned by three young people, Tom, Yvonne and Zara. Zara told me that its name was a matter of dispute between young people and the Council. This raised the issue of how far official systems really want to support young people's creation of their own identities and how much they want to control it:

It's called North Edinburgh Young People's Forum. The council call us Forth. But we're constituted...it's because we represent the Forth constituency for them...I think the whole, the council and Neighbourhood Partnerships and ken, Councillors and that, they have different, like, if you laid their maps on top of each other, not one would match.

Zara had completed a University degree and had been a member of the Youth Forum for around nine years but she said that she had never voted and would not know how to do so:

Don't know enough about it. Ye dinnae get taught it in school. They say tae ye to vote but, I've never voted, I dinna know how tae vote...I wouldn't know what to do. You're never shown what to do...it sounds really simple but, aye, for some people. No for me, I suppose.

It would be too simplistic to suggest that young people had no political sense. Rather, young people seemed to engage on individual issues which seemed directly to affect them. For example, several young people had been involved in the successful campaign to prevent a wall being built between Muirhouse and Silverknowes and some were involved in a North Edinburgh anti-poverty campaign. Tom described the Youth Forum's achievements, including the production of a booklet about,



all the things that we were seeing and the vandalism and open spaces left and the parks desolate and this sort of stuff. The state of the housing. To reflect what little community environment stuff's done.

Unfortunately, he was unsure what impact it had on subsequent actions by politicians after they presented it to the councillors at the City Chambers:

I don't know what they did with it after that though. We always give things to the councillors and they tell you they'll get back to you

## **Conclusions**

This chapter has explored how, as elsewhere (Cote and Bynner, 2008), many young people in Pilton can be confused about what becoming adult means and how it is marked, as well as being uncertain about whether they want to leave the certainty of childhood, even when there have been many problems, to move into an adult world with different challenges, including having to engage with people and structures beyond the immediate family, friendship and community networks in Pilton.

Social/external markers such as leaving home and gaining employment may be less certain for these young people than it was, for example, for their parents and grandparents. However, the experience of material poverty for many has been constant through generations. Young people described a common sense of markers in behaviours and social relationships that marked a shift to 'maturity', adult status, though experiences varied for different people at different times. As young people themselves conceptualised 'becoming adult', they made clear the interaction between 'social markers', such as moving into the employment market or becoming a parent, and 'behavioural markers', such as disengaging from street-based leisure activities and taking up adult responsibilities and interests, including moving into adult leisure spaces and, for a small number, becoming engaged in political campaigning. In

the 'social' context, outcomes for individuals are highly uncertain, influenced by events beyond young people's control. Young people seemed to have more sense of personal agency when they discussed how 'becoming adult' could be marked by behaviour changes, although changing their behaviours could mean that valued friendships might not continue. Their lack of engagement in formal political processes indicates their marginalisation from bases of political power. However, the involvement of some young people in campaigns where they felt that they could make a difference, can be viewed as their seizing of adult opportunities, also utilising the idea of 'youth as the future' to promote their causes.

Chapter Seven will continue the discussion of becoming adult, by paying attention to how social contexts change and young people have to adapt as they move from the context of school (or equivalent) into a challenging labour market context, where they will also have to reprioritise and change their behaviours to have any chance of finding and maintaining work.

**Introduction**

Chapter Three discusses statistics that illustrate the historical and contemporary labour market contexts in Pilton, comparing these to Edinburgh overall and to Scotland. This chapter will consider the personal challenges experienced by young people in Pilton as they begin to look for work. It will be emphasised that finding and maintaining employment is regarded by almost all young Piltoners as an important marker of adult identity and self-efficacy. Despite their difficulties, most young people expressed stoical views about their determination to find stable, long-term work. This chapter contests suggestions by think-tanks such as the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ), that the difficulties experienced by young people in finding secure work are more down to a 'culture of worklessness' than structural disadvantage. I will discuss policy responses which recognise the need to provide additional support for employment in places like Pilton, but I will suggest that many young people and professionals alike regard these as inadequate.

I will compare and contrast my analysis in Pilton with other studies, including McDowell's study (McDowell, 2003) in two English cities, suggesting that Piltoners experience greater marginalisation than the young people described there. I will draw on interviews with young people in Pilton to analyse individual and shared experiences, aspirations, plans and achievements, categorising the young people under three broad headings as 'Planners', 'Searchers' and 'Drifters'. Structural inequalities mean that the likelihood for many young people in Pilton of achieving and maintaining long-term, stable employment. In my conclusions, I will suggest that, given their bad experiences and lack of opportunities, it is remarkable that so many young people in Pilton continue to value the gaining and maintaining of paid employment and believe that they personally are accountable to achieve that, though potentially with a cost to their own well-being.

## Transitions into the labour market

As Shildrick and MacDonald (2007) and others (Biggart et al., 2008) note, in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, differences between individuals may play a minimal role compared to broader constraints, resources and opportunities that frame young people's transitions and influence their socio-economic outcomes. With 25% youth unemployment overall in Scotland and Pilton having higher levels of unemployment than elsewhere (Scottish Government, 2015a, 2015b), the realities of how the labour market operates serve to disadvantage young Piltoners.

Although many experiences are shared, individual young Piltoners also have a range of starting points as they move into the labour market. At school, many described disjointed experiences, including suspensions from school, shortened timetables and exclusions. Before finishing compulsory schooling, some had spent long periods of time at the local technical college rather than in the school setting. If we consider the snapshot moment when I conducted interviews, people were at different places in a range of transitions. Twenty-six people were interviewed. Of these, three people were still at school, one was at University while also being paid for youth work, related to her course. A further five were engaged in various types of paid employment – one was an apprentice hairdresser, one worked in a fast food restaurant, another worked in a telephone call centre, a fourth worked as a hotel chambermaid and a fifth worked as a residential child care worker. However, not one person had secure employment with a permanent contract. Six people were attending college-based vocational or employment training courses and another one was about to start a course. Around 35% of young people leaving the local Craigroyston High School had been officially categorised as NEET, not in employment, education or training (Education Scotland, 2012), the highest level in the country. In this group, a slightly higher proportion, ten (38%) out of a total of twenty-six young people would be classified as NEET.

Overall, as with Hall et al.'s (2009) Ebbw Vale study, young people's lives in Pilton are fairly mundane and typified by continuity rather than change. However, and perhaps reflecting an appreciation of the worsened labour market situation for young people (Scottish Government, 2014a, 2014b), unlike McKendrick et al.'s (2007) study in Drumchapel in Glasgow, where it was noted that young people tended to have generally positive outlooks about their future prospects, many young people in Pilton were less certain. Brent (2009) concludes from his study in Southmead, Bristol, that the limitations of their opportunities mean that place becomes a very important constituent of poor young people's identities. As with Evans' (2002) study in England and Germany, young people in places like Pilton might therefore be characterised as exhibiting 'frustrated agency rather than lack of agentic abilities or attitudes' (Evans 2002, p.261) when they discuss challenges in finding and maintaining work. As in Julkunen's (2001) study with young unemployed people in Scotland, and unlike the other countries where his research was carried out, with such uncertainty 'drifting may be a sensible strategy' (Julkunen, 2001, p. 265) in Pilton. As an illustration of the challenges, Hazel, a local employment advisor, suggested that the main purpose of the training courses that she sent young men on was to maintain peace in the community, rather than harbouring much chance of moving them into employment. She described moving young people through a series of 'meaningless' training courses at local technical colleges that are useless in terms of helping them find jobs. She cited the example of a one year bricklaying course as an example that erroneously raised expectations in young people that they would be skilled and qualified to find work:

You could have a year's bricklaying course. Now the young guys tell me what they do, and they build a wall and they knock it down and they build a wall and they knock it down and they do that three days a week and they get quite, very little theory, and some of these guys are barely literate that are doing these courses. Without having an apprenticeship as a bricklayer, the course is meaningless.

## **Failing families, not failing labour market?**

Regardless of individual experiences, the notion that paid work is an important marker of becoming adult and having an acceptable status was shared by all young people in this study, challenging the myth propagated by institutions such as the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) that many people in poor neighbourhoods, 'wear intergenerational worklessness as a badge of pride' (Centre for Social Justice, 2013, p. 48). However, some workers in the voluntary sector in Pilton, consciously or unconsciously, espouse similar ideas as the CSJ. For example, Ivan, worked locally to support young people into employment. He argued that some lack motivation because they receive Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and other benefits:

We've also got EMAs<sup>5</sup>, and people get money. So people are getting money from the off when they're 16, signing up to an activity agreement which actually becomes quite unhealthy because they get signed up, they get £30 for not really doing that much and then when there's a volunteering opportunity to try and get into something or there's a job placement, trying to get into an area of interest they don't really want to do it, because it's like well, I don't want to work for nothing, why am I doing it for free? And because from an earlier age they've actually been getting money for maybe job searching. So that doesn't quite work very well.

At odds with such assertions, I found that conventional, mainstream attitudes that value paid work are widespread in Pilton. As with Shildrick et al. (2012), and running counter to theories of intergenerational cultures of worklessness, from my interviews, I found no convincing evidence that young people are not committed to work and encouraged and supported by their families to find work. However families were structured, carers imbue young people with attitudes that emphasise the

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<sup>5</sup> Educational Maintenance Allowances

importance of work and a career. Helen was cared for by her aunt and she dismissed any suggestion that her aunt might let her shirk her responsibilities to find work:

She wants me tae, well obviously she wants me tae dae well. Like, say ah couldnae get a job, she'd want me tae try and apply for a next course up in child care and stuff like that.

Many young people criticised others whom they perceived as 'scrounging' off benefits and insisted that their own attitudes were very different. For example, as with most of the other young people interviewed, although she was unemployed, Patsy described a strong work ethic passed down to her by her mother and friction in the household if she did not seem to be trying hard enough to find work. Patsy drew on her own personal experience to describe anxiety that she might get 'trapped on benefits' if she were to start claiming. She seemed to feel that if things got too easy for her, a side of her nature that was lazy might begin to dominate. Although I did not divine anything in our interview to validate such fear of self, she was so worried about her potential weakness that she refused to claim benefits to which she might be entitled. It is difficult not to think that she was influenced also by current stigmatising discourses about 'benefits scroungers':

I feel like it just, you just get in a habit ae it. Cos ah have, like, before, ah signed on for 2 weeks...I was sittin' and daein' nothing and ah wis getting' this money and it was just lazy, just ridiculous and it pulled me back and it made me no want tae get a job. So now I'm, like, ah'm no even applying, ah'm no applying for anything. Ah'm just gonnae have tae think, like, ye're gonnae have to live without nothing. So that it'll make me want tae have all the necessities like holidays and that, ma pals, for me tae have that I'm and I'm gonnae have tae...so I'll just have tae get off ma bum.

Without exception, I was struck by the dedication of local workers to help young people overcome the challenges that they face on a daily basis in

trying to enter into a competitive labour market. I also gained the impression that, beyond the working context, most workers have a strong political awareness and recognise that the way the labour market operates nowadays particularly disadvantages young people who use their services. Nonetheless, as elsewhere (Shildrick et al., 2012), in interviews, many staff talked more about the impact of negative anti-work family values and practices, inherited through generations, as affecting people's worklessness, rather than the lack of opportunities. For example, Carol, who worked as a link worker at the local technical college explained people's worklessness as being related to their parents not having worked:

Some of them have never had a job because their parents have never had a job. And I think it's sadly, in some ways, not with a lot of people, all people, in some ways it's a generational thing that they just learn from their parents.

Des, a Youth Worker, who had grown up in the local community, shared a similar perspective, asserting that,

Generationally, a lot of parents haven't worked or don't work. And a lot of grandparents haven't worked or don't work. So aspirationally it's much more difficult for somebody at 12 to look out and see a world that's gonna be positive about them going out and working when all their kind of connections and all their networks are in the community they live in.

Hazel, an employment adviser, argued that because 'they haven't seen work around them...the barrier is the family', not the lack of suitable jobs for which young people are qualified. Hazel described a young client with whom she had been working, who had been pleased to find employment with the local council but was made redundant, taken on again and made redundant again. She acknowledged the impact that these circumstances, beyond his personal control, had had on his mental health and genuinely seemed to feel some sympathy for this. However, she then suggested that,



because his family background had been one without a strong work ethic, repeated disappointments like this would return him to his cultural norm; that is, following his father and grandfather into a culture of worklessness and use of drugs to get through the day:

It's like because, because they've already been disappointed so many times throughout their lives and then they take that next, huge step for them, to actually work and earn a wage and be feeling good about themselves; and to have that taken away, it's like 'Why did I bother? I should be like my dad and my granddad and everybody else and sign on and be on benefits and smoke cannabis all day.'

### **Youth employment opportunities in Pilton**

The entry into the labour market is tough for many young people in Pilton, as elsewhere. Studies (Mac An Ghaill, 1994; Shildrick and MacDonald, 2007) have shown that global social and economic changes have disproportionately and adversely affected working class young people. In Scotland, this is borne out by official statistics. In 2013, the Scottish Government-appointed Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce published its interim report in 2013 (Scottish Government, 2013). This noted (Scottish Government, 2013, p. 4) the challenges that young people face:

The current 77,000 unemployed 16-24 year olds... represents an unemployment rate of 19.1% among young people against 7.2% in the working age population. This anomaly is consistent with the fact that only one in four Scottish businesses employ people directly from education.

Nor does the future look bright. The Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce's interim report (Scottish Government, 2013) relied on the UK Commission for Employment and Skills 'Working Futures Report for Scotland' assessment (UK Commission for Employment and Skills

(UKCES), 2012) that a changing labour market would see low growth in areas of lower-skilled work, with the majority of jobs created between now and 2020 being highly skilled roles. This assessment would predict significant current and future challenges for young people in Pilton, many of whom leave school with few qualifications and often with little sense of what they want to do afterwards. They are not unusual in not knowing what they want to do at such an age. However, unlike the middle class young people who predominate in studies such as Arnett's (2006b), young Piltoners often lack a practical safety net which enables them to keep their heads above water while they work out what they want to do with their lives. As they do not often get into Higher Education and their families do not have money to support them to do a gap year, the pressure is on immediately to get paid employment. However, young people educated in the local Craigroyston Community High School are more than twice as likely as young people from other parts of Edinburgh to be classified as NEET when they leave school (City of Edinburgh Council, 2015). As Ivan explained, the young people whom he assisted,

Pretty much right across the board...fall into the NEET group, whether they're about to or they're in it, because by virtue of them not doing anything. They're not in work, they're not in education, they're not in training, they're not in anything.

While individuals' experiences vary in relation to their sense of agency in planning ahead, for all young people in this study, employment outcomes remain uncertain and not necessarily related to the degree of effort that they exert. There is no obvious relationship between family structures and people's attitudes to and experience of work and worklessness. Out of 23 who had left school, 11 people lived with their mother and father or stepfather, 9 lived with their mother, one lived with an aunt, one with his grandmother, one with a friend's family and one with his girlfriend. There were also no differences between people who went to different schools. In terms of attitudes to work, in line with other studies, (McDowell, 2003; Shildrick and MacDonald, 2007), traditional (and highly gendered)

aspirations to employment were widespread. Thus, typical examples of 'men's work' would be in construction, engineering or IT while typical 'women's work' would be in beauty, caring or retail.

Some people who have had traumatic experiences scapegoat immigrants to the area as having taken jobs that would have otherwise been available to them, by actions such as undercutting them on salaries. It was not possible to validate whether this had actually happened. In any case, rarely was the blame put on practices of large employers, characterised by writers such as Wacquant (2008, p.24) as 'violence 'from above'', actively disadvantaging groups in the labour market by prioritising actions to maximise profit at all costs. Such actions locally have included importing teams of workers from elsewhere to carry out construction in Pilton, rather than opening up opportunities to local people. However, although several staff described stigma and its impact as affecting employment opportunities, none of the young people nor the mothers' group felt that they had personally experienced that.

### **The 'Edinburgh Guarantee'**

The City of Edinburgh Council recognised in 2011 the need to be more proactive in supporting young people into employment. It established the 'Edinburgh Guarantee' for 16-19 year olds, which, according to its website, (City of Edinburgh Council, 2015),

Working with the public, private and voluntary sectors...seeks to increase the number of jobs, education and training opportunities being made available to young people in the City.

The Edinburgh Guarantee website (City of Edinburgh Council, 2015) claims that, since 2011, this partnership approach has had the following impact:

- 91% of school leavers entering a positive destination when leaving secondary education - a 10% increase

- 1370 jobs, apprenticeships or training opportunities have been generated
- 250 Employers have contributed to this success

It is unlikely that the benefits of the Edinburgh Guarantee would have been shared equally across the city in terms of supporting school leavers to secure 'a positive destination' (City of Edinburgh Council, 2015). Opportunities, even for accessing training, are stratified by class and gender and 'race' (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997) and young Piltoners would likely be disadvantaged compared to many others in the city. Experiences such as missing a lot of school days and having no qualifications, disrupted family situations affected by issues such as alcohol and drugs and getting into trouble with the law at an early age can affect young people's confidence as well as their material opportunities to take advantage of the Edinburgh Guarantee. Its confident assertions can marginalise and demotivate young people more than they are already, making them feel more like failures than they felt before. Local policy makers have recognised the specific challenges that young people face by funding services including the Community Renewal agency, based in the Pennywell shopping centre which boundaries West Pilton and Muirhouse and states as its vision,

...to help build the resilience of people, especially those in deprived communities, so they have better chances of securing and maintaining useful work and leading a healthy life.

(Community Renewal, 2015)

In his work at Community Renewal, Ivan provided advice and support services related to employment but he suggested that there were not really very many opportunities either for this age range or for these types of young people in the large public service organisations, i.e. Edinburgh Council or the NHS. What opportunities existed tended to be 'in hospitality, cleaning

jobs in agencies, so they're in and out of work' and the criteria for many of the schemes were set too high for them to be of benefit to the young people whom Ivan advised:

Things like apprenticeships and I mean some of the criteria that the council and like the Edinburgh Guarantee, it's set too, in my opinion and the staff's opinion...the criteria is set too high...so someone might need five standard grades at a certain level, or they might need a year's experience in hospitality and it's just like well, they've just come out of school so they haven't got that...it's usually about the qualifications though, and some of the people have obviously dropped out of school or they just didn't do very well at school, so they haven't got those grades.

Although services such as Community Renewal are important for individuals, as elsewhere (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005), they do not tackle underlying causes of marginality. There has been a considerable amount of redevelopment in Pilton and surrounding neighbourhoods and it would have been reasonable to expect that this might have created opportunities for local young people. A local councillor asserted the intention to ensure that construction jobs would go to local people, rather than 'these companies coming in for a fast buck, just come in, grab the money and off you go'. In the same breath, he accepted that that was exactly what had happened: 'You could have had somebody getting real life experiences of working on sites around there and that's failed'. Some local jobs existed in three supermarkets, at British Gas offices, the local further education college, a council office, Astley Ainsley leisure centre and in small shops and hairdressers. However, the way that large companies operate serves to disadvantage young people in Pilton from entering the local labour market. According to Ivan, large companies in and around the locality have tended to second people from elsewhere to start up new developments, such as new supermarkets. Once these have been established, when additional opportunities have emerged, he suggested that these have tended to be filled by skilled staff from other parts of the

city or students who, as elsewhere (Canny, 2001), in 'trading down' contribute to embedding young Piltoners at the bottom of the employment market:

The organisations who get these contracts, some of them are big UK wide organisations and they tend to have the same people working on contracts if it was in Glasgow or Aberdeen or Inverness...they move them around so there's not always opportunities there. For people working somewhere like Morrison's, yes, there should've been a lot of opportunities. But from what we experienced here, a lot of the jobs didn't go to local people, they either went to students or went to other people across Edinburgh.

Aside from lacking basic skills, including being able to use IT to submit applications, according to Ivan, young people in Pilton often have to compete with other people, whom he believes can 'can sell themselves better'. He described carrying out,

countless mock interviews with people or we've done countless reviews with someone trying to look at their skills and their skill set, their transferrable skills, and the young people can't come up with any skills. They can't say what they're good at.

Of course, it may be that such young people, especially those who have had problems in the educational system, not only lack confidence to 'sell themselves'. They may genuinely not have the skills that they need to compete in the employment market. No amount of 'mock interviews' can remedy that deficiency. Where young people said that they felt supported for entry into the labour market, this came from youth services, the local Further Education college and in employment-focussed training courses. Though they were less commonly available, on-job training and gaining apprenticeships are valued more by professionals and staff alike than short term training courses or college courses.

Wacquant has written extensively about what he calls ‘violence from above’ (Wacquant, 2008, p. 24). His thesis is that young people are constantly abused by the impacts of macro—level socio-economic change including, mass unemployment, relegation to decaying neighbourhoods and a heightened stigmatisation in their daily lives. This theory is applicable in Pilton. Several workers suggested that across Edinburgh there are job opportunities but it was clear from interviews that for many young Piltoners, their sense of stigmatisation has undermined their confidence to venture out of the district to take advantage of these. As in McDowell’s (2003) study of young men, young Piltoners’ opportunities can be regarded as spatially circumscribed. For example, Ivan described as ‘a real barrier’ for some young people the challenge of taking a fifteen minute bus ride and suggested that other reasons for this might include having been involved in ‘gangs’ and moving out of one’s ‘territory’. Responding to this, while Hazel, an employment adviser, acknowledged that there was a lack of meaningful job opportunities, she asserted as a priority the need to build young people’s confidence and self-esteem. Hazel described how she had worked with a group of young men aged 16-25 to consider what they felt were barriers to them moving on in employment and other areas of their lives. They talked about issues such as ‘violence, alcohol, drugs, relationships, confidence, self-esteem, and housing, all of these basic things’. They were able to refer them onto other services where they might even get work placement and the CSES card that would qualify them to work in the construction industry. Nonetheless, too often, she felt that, despite her input, their hopes were dashed:

I think it’s really, really difficult. Because, you know, we do the groundwork here, we build them up, if and required, they do get counselling, they do work through their issues. They’re ready to move on. You move them onto the next place. They’ll maybe go to college and do a wee course, they find work and then the work ends.

Many young people feel that training courses, designed to ready them for

employment by concentrating on building skills and confidence but without job opportunities at the end, are useless. Oonagh was highly critical of her experience on a series of training courses where her perception was that the training that was meant to help with finding work, was useless. There were no real job opportunities, not even a single work placement:

All we done was presentations for stupid things like drugs and it wasnae really stuff that would help ye look for jobs. Like, there'd just be a certain day during the week when they'd make everybody go online to look for jobs but other days it was just presentations and stuff.

### **Attitudes and experiences of young people**

I will now draw directly on interviews with young people to discuss and analyse individuals' attitudes and experiences in entering the labour market. As elsewhere (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997), opportunities for young people's in Pilton remain highly dependent on structural constraints that can impact on entire communities, with young people especially disadvantaged in the contemporary employment market. Despite facing significant challenges and frequent set-backs, contrary to 'underclass' discourses which paint young people generally as 'work-shy', young people in Pilton seem very committed to work. As in Henderson et al.'s research with young people in Edinburgh (2007), finding and keeping paid work can mark the beginning of adult identity and adult relationships and can serve as a source of developing personal confidence and authority, as well as of reducing dependence on parents and keeping out of trouble. As an indication of their commitment, it is noteworthy that fourteen people in this study had carried out some kind of voluntary work, which was often valued by the participants as a way of gaining useful experience on the way to finding paid work. As in Teesside (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005), people consistently felt that, as well as the potential of bringing material benefits, even low status, unsociable and unpleasant work contributed to their psychological well-being. There was also a degree of ambition: most



young Piltoners want more than just a job; they want to have a 'career', though what that is and how they might achieve it may be unclear. I would question whether that is so different from other social groups; the difference is that these young people are judged more harshly by others and the implications for their inability to plan, with their range of disadvantages are more damaging. It may also be the case that, as in Julkunen's (2001) study, not planning ahead is a reasoned response to the circumstances of an uncertain employment market.

Many young people relate success to hegemonic norms, such as owning a house and car, having children and being in a long-term relationship and/or marriage, even where all of that is very different from their own lived experiences. They tend to agree with notions that individuals are responsible for achieving 'success', through finding and maintaining paid employment, and most invest a great deal of time and anxious energy in thinking about and trying to find employment, though usually with little success. In response, and again reflecting hegemonic norms, they tend to comprehend such outcomes as resulting from their own personal failures, rather than the inequities within global capitalism played out a local level in Pilton.

My findings bear similarities and differences to McDowell's (2003) study with 'working class' young men in Cambridge and Sheffield. The similarities included that in each place there was a widely held belief that labour market participation was a morally important objective to pursue. In none of the places was there a dominant 'workshy' culture. In each site there were also strongly gendered views about the kinds of jobs that were suitable for women – for example, hair and beauty, cleaning, care work and retail - and those that were suitable for men – for example, manual work, driving, engineering, technical professions. I also found some evidence, as in McDowell's study (2003), though more from my interviews with staff than from young people themselves that these gendered attitudes towards different types of work affected the kinds of jobs that young people sought. In a market where the service sector was expanding,

this could potentially have more severe consequences for young men than for young women. As McDowell puts it (2003, p. 134),

There is little evidence...that the young men to whom I talked are looking for work in the retail sector, in leisure or tourism or the hospitality industry, despite the fact that these have been the fastest growing sectors for less well-educated workers in recent years and also areas where these young men themselves had found temporary part-time employment.

Aside from gender issues, in both studies, the young people also held different views from some researchers about the stigma associated with certain kinds of jobs. In one section of her book, McDowell introduces what she calls (2003, p. 148),

the derogatory term 'McJobs'...often used generically to characterize entry-level, jobs that are casual, poorly paid, often involving shifts and/or long hours, with few benefits and opportunities for promotion and with high turnover rates.

McDowell's interviewees (2003) who work in McDonald's do not regard their jobs as demeaning. Their responses were similar to the feedback I received from one young person in Pilton, Yvonne, who was working in a fast food restaurant and really enjoying it, especially the social contact, despite the insecurity of working on a 'zero hours' contract. Another notable similarity between the two studies is that McDowell's young men's lives were, like the Piltoners, often very spatially circumscribed. They did not travel far, most lived at home with parents and/or carers and they wanted to work as locally as possible.

However, some differences between the studies are very marked. In McDowell's study (2003), young men were far more confident than the Piltoners were that they would always be able to find work, perhaps accurately reflecting the reality of the different employment market

situations and of the individual experiences of the research participants: in Cambridge, 8 out of 10 young men, and in Sheffield, 10 out of 14 young men had some labour market experience. These were far higher rates than in Pilton. Whereas in Pilton, there were only one or two references made to continuing in the same work field as parents or grandparents, McDowell asserts (2003, p. 24) that in her study, the young men were confident 'to be able to reproduce the same gendered patterns of responsibility that their parents and grandparents had relied on before them'. This also reflects an important difference between the studies: in Cambridge and Sheffield local connections and personal knowledge are cited as being the most important ways of finding work. There was little evidence of such pathways into work in Pilton.

It is important to recognise that, especially at this age, there will be many things going on in people's lives which impact on their attitudes and behaviours and the way they communicate. This is simply a snapshot of what people said and exhibited when I was carrying out the research and their labour-related trajectories. The main contrast between my findings and McDowell's (2003) is that, in the latter, there appears to be lots of work around. This therefore has an impact on the categories into which she fits her research participants: Actively Seeking Employment: Committed Workers and Reluctant Learners. My labels – Planning, Searching and Drifting – in the tables<sup>6</sup> 7.1, 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4 - indicate aspects of what people told me about their experiences, behaviours and attitudes without labelling the people as static types and also indicating my intention of referencing context rather than making a judgement about individuals. Unlike McDowell's findings, I would be hesitant to describe any of the young people as reluctant, although some were certainly demoralised by experiences they had. Given these, many were remarkably optimistic. Similar to McCrone's (1994) findings more than thirty years ago in nearby Kirkcaldy, the 'Planning' group – can be described as 'managing', while

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<sup>6</sup> I have not included the three people who were still at school.

others, 'Searching' and 'Drifting', 'cope' or just try to 'get by' (McCrone, 1994, pp. 69–70).

**Table 7.1: Young people and work in Pilton**

	Typical traits:	Mainly exhibited by:
Planning	Evidence of commitment to work Clear aspirations and plans Evidence of progress	Helen, John, Leona, Mark, Nora, Tom, Willie, Xander, Yvonne, Zara
Searching	Evidence of commitment to work Little evidence of focussed planning Mixed outcomes	Bernard, Fiona, Grace, Karen, Oonagh, Patsy, Quinn
Drifting	Statement of commitment to work Degree of disillusionment	Andy, Clare, Edgar, Irene, Rob, Vincent

In the next three sections, I provide a snapshot for each individual who had left school (23 of them) of their current employment situation and their stated employment aspirations. According to Bynner (2005), as they enter the labour market, disadvantaged young people characteristically face the prospect of 'patchwork careers', with part-time and casualised jobs interspersed with periods of unemployment and a plethora of training and other scheme. From this study, the experience of young Piltoners matches this to some extent but only a small minority could be seen as having anything that can be classified as a 'career', patchwork or otherwise.

## Planning

Name	Current situation	Stated career aspirations
Helen	At college, studying Child Care.	'Working with disabled children.'
John	Working and training as a junior in a local hairdresser.	'Hopefully, be a big, famous hairdresser.'
Leona	At college, outside the district, studying beauty therapy, (SVQ Level 2).	'I'd like to do mobile, have my own business and go to people's houses instead of them coming to a shop.'
Mark	Currently doing an HNC in civil engineering. Has had several part-time jobs. Has volunteered for Oxfam.	'I want to be a civil engineer...I mean, I know that people drink dead water and stuff in Africa and other Third World countries but I thought, the reason why they don't have, they might be drinking dead water is they're poor, Third World countries obviously, they're paupers. The reason that they're drinking that is that they cannot afford, maybe build water systems, like, you know, you often hear, like, running water and taps and stuff. So I thought I could come up, maybe, maybe I could come up with an affordable way of doing it.' 'This year I get HNC and go on to HND next year...maybe later on, you know PhD or something like that...but again, things change, you know. I still have my aspirational point to be a lawyer...so if it goes that way, I would have to finish about, maybe, my Masters and then I will start Law.'
Nora	At college, studying English and Social Sciences. Has had several jobs and working at British Gas call centre.	'I want to do Psychology, Business Psychology when I go to Uni' 'Ah'm gonna get my degree but normally, at the end ae Uni, they give away internships for Aviva and stuff so I'd like to do an internship and then after that'll open mair doors. And then I'd like to work my way up a business. And then fae that become a manager for, I think, 4 years minimum before you can. And then I'd open up my ain sales and marketing company.'
Tom	Has completed University Degree in Community Education. Working as a temporary Residential Child Care worker. Lots of voluntary experience, currently with Youth Forum.	He does not specify setting, but implies Youth work.
Willie	Currently unemployed. Had been working in Sales for two and a half years. Just done an 'induction for working down the Pipes and hoping to hear back from that within the week'. Used to volunteer at Youth Centre.	'Ten years from now? Running a business...a Sales/ marketing business...I've been doing it for two years and I'm pretty good at it... I was selling roof comb at the time. I wouldn't be selling roof comb now. But I'd maybe go onto either windows, doors and conservatories. Obviously, I would have to get a joiner to do that.'
Xander	Has completed an apprenticeship and had several jobs. Now back at college, training as a football coach. Volunteers at Youth Centre.	'I want tae coach in America. There's a skills soccer camp in America. It's 5 months a year. I could save up. I could dae that when I get my badges and that. In 5 years, 6 years.' 'I'm gonnæ be a coach... fae now till 15, 20 year. That's what I want tae dae, aye. I'm determined, I'm motivated tae dae that.'
Yvonne	Has been working in a fast food restaurant on a 'zero hours' contract for 5 years. Volunteers at Youth Forum.	She does not describe any aspiration but she enjoys what she is doing.
Zara	Taking University Degree in Community Education (3 <sup>rd</sup> year). Sessional worker in local youth service. Volunteers at Youth Forum.	'Hopefully get a part-time or a full-time job in Community Education, preferably. I'd quite like to, I'm not fussed, I would dae pretty much anything. Maybe sport, some sort of sport and youth work mixed together would be nice.'

**Table 7.2: The 'Planners'**

All of the 'Planners' describe a strong commitment to finding meaningful, secure work and they have embarked on plans to achieve this. They have a range of aspirations and their experiences to date have varied. With the exception of Willie, they were all either currently employed in some capacity or, more often, engaged in education or training that could obviously help them achieve what they wanted in employment. However, Willie indicated confidently that he expected his current period of unemployment to be temporary, backing this up with the assertion that he was aiming to continue what had been a successful start to a sales career. Yvonne differed from the others in the group in that, although she had been in continuous work for five years, she did not provide any indication that she was planning for the future. Contrary to other researchers' (for example, McDowell, 2003; Butler and Watt, 2007) arguments about the dehumanising nature of the kind of work Yvonne was engaged in as an assistant at a fast food restaurant, she said that she enjoyed the work and the atmosphere, although she complained about the fact that being on a series of 'zero hours' contracts meant that she was never sure how many shifts she would get. All of the 'Planners' also volunteered descriptions of having support and encouragement from their families.

Tom and Zara were the oldest of the group included in the study and they had had similar trajectories since leaving school (Tom went to the Royal High, Zara to St. Augustine's). Telford College was the immediate post-school destination where Tom did an HNC in Social Science and Zara did an HNC in Sports Coaching. That qualified Tom to go to Moray House School of Education at Edinburgh University where he completed a degree in Community Education. Zara did another HNC, this time at Stephenson's College on Working with Communities then followed Tom to Moray House, where she was in her third year of the four year course. Tom was now working at a residential school for young people in care outside the district, though on a temporary contract. Both Zara and Tom have worked in youth community organisations within and outwith Pilton through college placements and as sessional workers.

Staff and young people alike believe that learning skills in a workplace could be more useful than college-based training. John therefore felt very lucky to be employed as a trainee hairdresser. This enabled him to learn technical skills, gaining qualifications more quickly than he would in college while also learning to appreciate the other components of the work, including customer service. Helen and Leona were also undertaking training related to their career intentions - child care and beauty therapy respectively. Helen went to a local college, Leona to a college on the opposite side of the city. Both young women were clear about how their current studies would qualify them for their intended professions. Helen had moved directly into her preferred field, albeit after a short period of unemployment, and regarded it as what she wanted to do for the rest of her life. Leona had previously taken a part-time Psychology course at Telford College and had a series of part-time customer service posts which had taught her that she enjoyed working with people, which was a main motivating factor for her. However, she does not think that Beauty Therapy would necessarily be her long term career and was open to the option of returning to study Business at a later stage:

I do like that aspect of kind of working, working with people but kind of serving them, giving them a service. Cos then, at the end of it, they're happy with the, if they're happy with the result, it's like making people happy...I kind of want to make people happy with the result of the service that I've given them...once I've done beauty therapy, I think I'll then decide exactly what I want to do and, you know, maybe go on to do a business course. If that's definitely what I want to do.

Having not done as well academically at school as she might have wished, Nora was studying English and Social Sciences at Telford College as part of a plan to get to University to study Business Psychology. Work seemed very important to Nora, not just to earn money but to create an adult identity - 'I feel it defines you'. It also opened up opportunities to see the world

I think there's mair to life than Pilton. I dunno, just, I dinnae want tae be stuck here for the rest of my life and wonder what it's like to live in Glasgow and London and New York.

Nora has high long-term aspirations – 'hopefully, I want to be a managing director' – and she demonstrated focus and realism in her short-term goals. She had done a number of courses and work experience, including sales, which she had loved. That had inspired her in her chosen studies. While studying, she was also working as a part-time telephone customer services agent in the local British Gas office. Whereas she loved door-to-door selling, she regarded the British Gas job a means to an end, 'something to go on my CV. Nora recognises that progress to success in her career would require substantial personal investment and that it would take time. Although she was committed not to lose sight of her ultimate aspiration, she also knew that the tumultuous nature of the labour market made her likely outcomes uncertain.

Xander and Mark both regarded themselves as embarked upon long term, ambitious career projects and they were currently engaged in actions to succeed with them. Xander described having made 'mistakes' immediately post-school, like 'messing around 'at work. He had been 'paid off' from seven jobs, yet he had persevered and finished an apprenticeship in insulation. He talked about changing jobs with ease, when he wanted to move onto something new. He had started working in manual jobs but had now set his sights on becoming a football coach. He had set himself long and short-term goals, and he was monitoring his progress against these. His 'seven-year plan' included obtaining professional football coaching qualifications and eventually working in his intended field in the USA. He described seeking and finding support from appropriate mentors, such as a coach at college and also being prepared to be flexible, where necessary. He located his own determination within having successfully overcome physical injuries that could have prevented him from following a football career:



I had to get an operation on my feet so that cancelled football right out. So I sat in for about three months. I could hardly walk. I had to get, tae basically start tae walk again, start tae play fitba' again. Frae scratch. See, that's another thing, somethin' that's took ye right down tae the ground, ye can build yerself back.

Mark had completed his school studies in Africa, before moving to Edinburgh at age 16 to join his mother, who had emigrated here. He had a number of part-time jobs, working as a driver disposing garbage, cleaning offices and as a bartender in a hotel. However, he had given up all of his part-time jobs, for different reasons. He told me that he had gained his first job while working as a volunteer in a charity shop. A man had offered him a job driving a waste disposal truck and he was imprecise about what other manual work it entailed. He told me that, at least part of the time, he was paid 'cash in hand', and I inferred from his contradictory statements and vagueness that it may have been semi-legal work. He gave that up to take up work as an office cleaner but he gave this up after having to clean up after an office party when what he called his 'shit phobia' was stimulated by having to clean up a toilet after an office party. He described coming out of the toilet, 'it was extremely disgusting', and he came out and 'this person was laughing at him' so he 'just quit right there and then, you know, because I could not handle it'. He then worked as a waiter in a hotel in central Edinburgh but gave that up as he was feeling that it was interfering with his studies. Mark was currently doing an HNC in civil engineering. He said that he had had to start at that level as his school qualifications from Africa were not recognised here. However, his subjects had been English, Divinity and History, not really relevant to pursuing a career in civil engineering. Mark talked quite grandly about his capabilities and ambitions. He sounded as though he knew what he was doing for periods of time, but then he would change his mind about what he wanted to do and what his plans were several times in the course of the interview. Nonetheless, if civil engineering was now to be his career, the studies he was currently undertaking were moving him in the right direction.

## Searching

Name	Current situation	Stated career aspirations
Bernard	Unemployed, 'Trying tae get a job, like in Rathbone'. Volunteers at Youth Centre.	'I think I'll achieve great things, like loads of stuff to do with, like, youth work but I dinnae ken what it's called but it, ye dae something and it makes sure that ye're no like a paedo or something, somebody that's gonnae take children away, ye like daein' it. Like a test tae make sure you're no that person. Like games, video games design, just boost up your confidence and work on the computers and stuff.'
Fiona	Unemployed, dropped out of hairdressing course at college. Volunteers at Youth Centre. Now job hunting.	'I would like to work in a nursery.' 'I want tae be a nanny, like no here, like, abroad.'
Grace	Unemployed. Volunteers at Youth Centre. Got an appointment with 'Right Track' in a few weeks. She also studied Child Care on day release when she was at school.	'Work wi' youth...cos I like, like I want tae help people, like if they've got problems and stuff.' 'I want to travel the world and help youngsters all over.'
Karen	Unemployed. 'I've never really worked properly. I've always either done volunteering work or work experience.' Currently volunteers at Youth Centre.	'I used to want to become a midwife...I did look into that and it was paying it myself so I couldn't really do much about that any more...I definitely want tae get intae that when ma kid's at school'. (She is pregnant).
Oonagh	Unemployed. Has been on several training courses. Studied hairdressing. Several temporary jobs – cleaning, a nursery and Royal Mail. Applied but turned down for the army. Now planning to volunteer at a nursery.	'I want to be a midwife.'
Patsy	Unemployed. Studied hairdressing and has worked in two salons and as a cleaner. Applied for the army but did not go for fitness test. Has applied to be a domestic in the NHS.	'I want to be a lawyer...the only thing that puts me off about it is, people that are actually guilty, you've got to fight for them to be innocent as well.' 'All the plans I've had in the past, like, 'I'm gonnae do this' and 'I'm gonnae do that', everything just goes wrong. Like, 'I'm gonnae become a hairdresser'. 'I'm gonnae get married'...I dunno what I wannae dae. I just dinnae wanna plan it. I feel like if I plan it, it'll go wrong.'
Quinn	Unemployed. Has done work experience as a joiner and in NHS. Did army preparation course but did not follow through. Several training courses. Has worked at Royal Mail. Volunteers and has had some paid work at Youth Centre.	'Jobs are hard to get. Puts people off as well. I think that's how some people just go to jail because they're no getting jobs, they don't want to sign on or that and just basically want money so they have to dae stuff.' (He then described how to sell on stolen goods.)

**Table 7.3: The 'Searchers'**

The 'Searchers' are just as committed as the 'Planners' to work as a social responsibility and a marker of attaining an adult identity. Many have volunteered at the local youth centre. However, they were all currently

unemployed. They were less focussed than the 'Planners' on what they wanted to do and how they were going to achieve it. Bernard wanted to be a 'video game tester', as an extension of his leisure interests but unlike Xander (with his football), he could not describe any plans about how to take this forward. Fiona and Grace, had ideas about childcare, reflecting areas where they had some knowledge and experience, having acted as informal carers within their families.

For some of these young people, important events in their lives have made them feel unconfident. For example, at the age of 19, Patsy was going through a painful divorce experience which she said had made her feel that planning in any area of her life was pointless as she would only be disappointed. Karen was currently pregnant and not living with the father and, although her declared aspiration was to train to be a midwife, once her child was going to school, she described her exploration of this option as being in the past and said that she would probably have to postpone taking that forward until her child was at school:

I want tae definitely get intae that when ma kid's at school. Ye know, then I can definitely know that I have enough time, enough childcare to train up.

Along with many others, Karen was committed to the idea that volunteering work would help develop skills that would enable her to find paid work. Although she was four years out of school, she had 'never really worked properly' but she retained a belief that 'all work experience is good experience' and that a CV demonstrating experience was important:

I've always done either volunteering work or work experience...every Thursday I come down here and do admin. I used to help out at the crèche up at the Salvation Army. And my work experience, I worked at North Edinburgh Childcare. Worked there and other work experience, I was at 'New Look'... my work experience was with, what's it called, Prince's Trust, and then I was

at Telford College. They got me through to the North Edinburgh Childcare thing and then I went to, I've done a few courses with, have you heard of Tomorrow's People? Well, I've done quite a few courses with them. I've done the Fire Brigade course with them. I was meant to do the Army one... all work experience is all good experience, especially something really good you can put down as your CV. So all of that kinda adds up and hopefully gets you a job at one point.

Young people and staff talked about application procedures and employment arrangements such as 'zero hours' contracts that dehumanise these young people and undermine their confidence and self-esteem. I interviewed two friends, Oonagh and Patsy, together. They were trying hard but they both seemed affected by external circumstances and experiences of precarious, short-term work, training courses which they have usually regarded as useless, lack of respect from potential employers and a feeling that the system is against them. This is similar to what Toynbee (2003) describes as constant disrespect shown to unemployed people and low-paid workers by institutions and employers. Patsy described spending hours applying online for supermarket jobs, only to find that the vacancies had gone as soon as she submitted the application:

It's, cos you're applying online, they never update online. Jobs are never updated online. It's the application forms, you'll send it and you'll send it, 2 seconds later, ye've no got the job. It's like, how have they reviewed that? Do you know what I mean? And you're possibly applying, like the Asda form's two hours long and it's just stupid questions and it's ridiculous stuff like 'What would you dae in aisle 9 if you were there and somebody was in aisle 20 and they spilt a can of juice?' and it's like 'Get somebody that's closer tae aisle 20', just stupid questions!

Not only do the application processes waste people's time; the questions asked often reinforce the marginalisation that young people feel already.

Thus, for example, Oonagh described being asked questions such as ‘how much petrol you’d put in your car if you were travelling to certain places’. Her response was, ‘Like, how would we know that, we don’t drive?’ It could of course be the case that even for supermarket jobs, the employers have a clear idea that they want a more (middle class?) worker. Perhaps asking this question enables employers to filter out these kinds of young people, exactly as they intend. Oonagh and Patsy veered from one idea to another in terms of what they said they wanted to do. Patsy identified finding her first paid job as a hairdresser as a marker of a move towards adulthood and independence from her mother. However, it turned out that she had been employed illegally, with the employer not making any contribution to her tax or national insurance payments:

I was getting paid ‘cash in hand’ and ah didnae know that. I just thought I was getting money. I was like ‘This is brilliant’. I was getting money every week. I wasnae getting taxed. Ah just didnae know and ma mum was asking ‘Why are you no getting wage slips?’ an’ ah wis like ‘Oh maw, it doesnae matter. Try tae keep outae ma way’...ah was trying tae keep her out ae my life. I wis earning this money that I thought was amazing so I was trying tae keep ma mum outae my life. But I wouldnae have got taxed anyway on the amount of money I was earning because I wasnae earning enough but I was still getting paid ‘cash in hand’.

Oonagh said that she wanted to be a midwife, and she indicated that she had investigated how to achieve that. The two young women also described how they had considered joining the army as an option. It would offer a way of getting away from Pilton. However, neither had followed their plans through and they then went on to equate joining the army with getting work as holiday ‘reps’, as both would offer opportunities to see the world. Patsy surmised that she might train to be a lawyer, but she was unclear about how to achieve that and did not demonstrate any real commitment to achieving it.

## Drifting

Name	Current situation	Stated career aspirations
Andy	Unemployed. Went to college twice, 1 <sup>st</sup> administration, 2 <sup>nd</sup> gaming design – ‘The first time I didn’t do so well but then the second time I finally got qualifications.’ Has done several employment training courses and some work experience. Has football coaching badge. Volunteers at PYCP.	‘If I could decide what I wanted to do, I really would love to be a games designer.’ ‘I mean, I almost did sortae, considered the possibility of sortae going up to Dundee University where they have, as I understand, got one of the best of when it comes to games design educations anywhere. So that was in my head as well, yeah. That would be where I would really like to go.’  ‘I’d say I don’t think I see myself doing very much but it can all change...it’s like, honestly, I mean I’m someone who, I mean, I think to some people, especially some people in here, that it would come across that I’m someone who’s sortae a bit maybe too laid back, a bit lazy’.
Clare	Unemployed. At college but says she ‘forgot’ what she is studying.	‘A hairdresser.’
Irene	Currently on ‘Right Track’ training course.	‘I dunno. I wanted to work in child care but now I dunno...I dunno what I want to do as long as I get a job.’
Rob	Unemployed. Has applied for two or three college courses – vehicle motoring engineering and painting and decorating and mechanicals - and done two ‘Get Ready for Work’ courses at Rathbone and Maximise. Has not applied for any other jobs.	‘Ah wannae get a job and that, dinnae want tae be a bum all my life’.
Edgar	Unemployed. Used to volunteer at Youth Centre. Has been on a six-month training course – with only three days’ work placement. Has a meeting with another one arranged.	‘A joiner or a mechanic...because I like daein’ stuff wi’ ma hands. Like I couldnae sit in front ae a desk for hours and hours and hours. I would rather be, like, active.’ ‘Hopefully, ah’ll get intae college at Stevenson for mechanics or at Telford for joinery at the next time round then just stick in as well as I can at that and hopefully something comes oot ae it at the end, eh.’
Vincent	Unemployed. College, then a series of short term jobs – glazier, welding and fabricator, Network Rail, Council, labouring, sales. Describes stealing to get money.	Unspecific: ‘Looking for jobs mate, that’s, my main goal is looking for a job at the moment, yup.’

**Table 7.4: The ‘Drifters’**

The ‘Drifters’ would be the young people who might be judged by some to fit the negative stereotype of ‘moral underclass’ (Levitas, 2005), stigmatised for their own failure to find work. However, this would be an unfair judgement. Although, with the exception of Irene, who was on a ‘Right Track’ training course, they were all currently unemployed, examination of their narratives showed that they have had diverse

experiences, with a range of reactions to them. Three – Rob, Edgar and Vincent – described having being involved in a range of violent and criminal activities, which had resulted in two – Rob and Edgar – having detailed criminal records.

Although, like others, they all asserted that they were committed to finding paid work, the 'Drifters' were disengaged from the labour market to varying extents. Edgar had been on a series of training courses but these did not feel particularly useful; for example, one six- month course had only given three days' work experience. Nor had the training courses opened up employment opportunities. Nonetheless, he said that he remained motivated to find work. He was looking for manual work on a building site and had researched how he could gain a certification that would enable him to do this work. Longer term, he was applying to get into college to study joinery or mechanics. He was one of the few interviewees who implied that structural disadvantages were an influence:

It's just, they're no really making much effort to make sure everybody's able to live off their ain self instead of goin' on the dole.

The 'Drifters' tended to say that they would take any job but they also seemed not really to expect that they would succeed. Some threw out a whole range of options for careers but showed little evidence of actively pursuing any of them. Andy said that he wanted to be a games designer and was able to explain why he wanted to do it. He claimed that he had found that Dundee University had one of the best game design courses, but he had done nothing to try to gain qualifications to get onto the course. He described how Edinburgh had one of the world's largest gaming developers and how to get into the company but he had taken no action to do that.

For this group of young people, trying hard to find employment but being constantly let down and disappointed had led to anger and mental health problems. At times, young people seemed really despondent because of

their bad experiences in the labour market. Edgar described what seemed like 'self-medicating' every day with cannabis to control ADHD and temper. Vincent described a range of unstable work experience, college training and unemployment as his norm:

Aye, ah've had a few jobs. Rail company. Welding and fabricator. Workin' wi' the council. Glazier...glazier company went bust. Building and fabricating company went bust. The council was only an 8 months' job, never got taken back on. And the Rail was meant tae be a start-up. Ah never heard anything back

He described the impact of his unstable employment situation on his mental health:

Depressing. Aye, depressing mate. Very depressing. Sittin' about. Wakin' up. Just daein' the same thing every day. You waken up in the morning and you go 'Oh my God, what am I going to do today'. Laze about. Look out the windae. Look at the same shite that's happening in Pilton every single day...it's just stressed me tae the hilt now. Tae the fact that ah cannae handle sittin' about any mair...ah'll tell ye for a fact right now. Stress is a big problem. In my life anyway.<sup>7</sup>

## Conclusions

While Chapter Three provided, among other things, statistics about the labour market context in Pilton, comparing this to Edinburgh overall and to Scotland, this chapter has considered the personal challenges experienced by young people in Pilton as they begin to look for work. Many young people enter on this journey, having had disjointed and unsatisfactory school experiences, which have impacted on their self-

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<sup>7</sup> However, although Vincent described his commitment to work in his interview with me, a member of staff subsequently told me that he had made clear to them that he would not consider supermarket work as he considered that to be 'below' him.



confidence, as well as disadvantaging them in a competitive market where others may have more formal qualifications than they do. Accounts of staff and young people alike have suggested that the jobs that are available locally are often taken by outsiders. As well as this, the experience of feeling stigmatised can present real barriers to some young Piltoners in exploring employment options beyond the neighbourhood.

Recognising the need for support, employment training schemes, advice and support services provided by agencies such as Community Renewal have been established to try to help young people into work. The 'Edinburgh Guarantee' has set ambitious targets to support young people. However, even some of the professionals who refer into training programmes doubt the latter's ability to really help young people find and maintain work. Employment processes of some employers may also discriminate against these kinds of young people. The impact of this can be severe, reinforcing individuals' feelings of personal failure. In some cases, this leads people to scapegoat newcomers, mainly Eastern European immigrants, for their inability to find work. The reality here is different from McDowell's contexts in Cambridge and Sheffield (McDowell, 2003). There were simply more employment opportunities for young people in her study.

Given all of the above, it is remarkable that, from their narratives, young people in Pilton remain strongly committed to the idea of finding worthwhile and meaningful work. In line with Shildrick et al.'s (2012) review, there was no evidence in Pilton of an intergenerational culture of worklessness. Young Piltoners believe that they themselves have a responsibility to find and retain meaningful work and many are critical of the idea of living on welfare benefits, contrary to the 'underclass' discourse (Levitas, 2005) that often dominates media and political discussion.

I would challenge the application of the concept of 'social exclusion' to these young people's contexts. The young people whom I have described as 'planning', 'searching' or 'drifting' are not dislocated from 'society';

rather, they are disadvantaged within it. Their trajectory into stable employment may be difficult – indeed some may never achieve that. However, almost without exception, they strongly identify with and promote hegemonic ideas that paid work marks participation in society (Levitas, 2005) and that the individual is responsible to achieve that (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997). As elsewhere (Butler and Watt; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; McDowell, 2003), they also hold very conservative ideas about what constitutes work that is appropriate for each gender. The fact that many young people carry out unpaid voluntary work in their own community provides evidence that most young people are not work-shy. However, as Furlong and Cartmel (1997) have suggested, the sense of personal failure for circumstances beyond their control can damage young people's health and well-being; in this study, Vincent provides an eloquent case study of the impact of uncertain employment and unemployment on mental health.

The reality, as noted in other studies (for example, Biggart et al., 2008; Shildrick and MacDonald, 2007), is that, here as elsewhere, individual agency and differences between individuals are likely to have less impact on employment outcomes here than structural socio-economic inequalities. Structural inequalities mean that the likelihood for many young people in Pilton of achieving and maintaining long-term, stable employment is highly uncertain. That most remain so determined and driven deserves commendation.

## **Chapter Eight:      Leisure life transitions**

Studies of youth transitions are typically dominated by consideration of the move from compulsory schooling into the labour market (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005). From the perspectives of young people, changes in their leisure lives are often as crucial; their social networks change and becoming adult is marked by behavioural and social changes, such as moving away from street-based social contexts. This chapter explores how leisure contexts provide opportunities for young Piltoners to develop their identities, while bonding with family members at home, and with friends, sometimes at home but more commonly on the streets or in youth facilities, including PYCP. It will be seen that ‘muckin’ about’ in Pilton’s streets and leisure spaces offers rich and highly valued social opportunities, where naïve and mundane behaviours and risky behaviours and criminality intersect.

In Pilton, as elsewhere (Barry, 2005b, p. 126), kudos gained from offending can be ‘perceived as an attractive and available means of self-identity and social identity’. Other researchers (Brent, 2009; Lawy, 2002) have drawn attention to how risk-taking leisure activities, such as joyriding (Brent, 2009; Stephen and Squires, 2003) can be seen as community activities. I will discuss how ‘adult’ behaviours, including sexual experimentation and alcohol and drug use, bring opportunities and risks for young people. In discussing attitudes and behaviours related to alcohol and drug use, I will draw for comparison on data from the Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey (SALSUS) (NHS Scotland, 2014a, 2014b), which is the most important source of data on substance use behaviour among young people in Scotland. Standing (2014) asserts that working-class young people’s leisure lives are more circumscribed than in the past. This discussion challenges that position and emphasises that young people in Pilton exhibit varying levels of personal agency in the decisions they make about their social activities and contexts and their companions that influence and mark their transitions to adulthood.

## At home

Interviewees described with joy the opportunities they have to socialise with their families at home, including demonstrating skills such as cooking, what Xander called, 'giein' it the old Jamie Oliver', referencing the television cook. Donald emphasised that when he cooks for his family, it is not a chore, 'just I like daein' it, it's just amuses me'. Watching television with family members is also commonplace. Some young women talked about watching soaps and the 'X Factor'. Young men, specifically, tended to talk about watching sport and comedy. Playing video games is a more common pastime than watching television. This may be a solitary pursuit, or friends might come round to join in. Other activities that young people described include studying, listening to and writing music – not different from other teenagers.

Being indoors does not necessarily mean that young people are isolated from the outside world. Most of these young people frequently use Facebook and other social media. With few exceptions, this is to connect with each other in the locality, rather than extending networks beyond Pilton. For some young people who live in the area but go to school or college elsewhere, Facebook is a good way of keeping in touch with their school and college friends. Some people also described the opportunities presented by new technology, such as PlayStation and X Boxes, to build friendship networks beyond Pilton. Standing (2014) describes Internet use as passive. That is not borne out by the stories of young people such as Bernard, who described how playing with his X Box presents opportunities to build what he felt were friendships with people beyond the environs of Pilton:

I've made quite a lot of friends on (X Box) Live. I've got this wee Polish person that stays in Switzerland or something and I talk tae him all the time. He's quite decent.

Although Bernard was physically located in Pilton, his networks are international, though constrained to the limitations of video-game virtual reality.

### **Outside the home**



**Figure 8.1: Pilton Park**



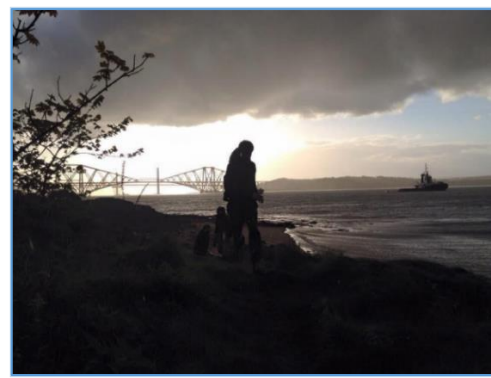
**Figure 8.2: Pilton Gala Day, 2012**

No main roads run through Pilton, which means that the streets are rarely, if ever, full of cars. Pilton is located on the periphery of the city and near to the Firth of Forth waterway, with long beaches, giving on to the North Sea. There are large areas of open grassland within the scheme. All of this means that there are many outside spaces for young people to meet and play, subject of course to the constraints of Scottish weather. Bernard described the external environment as a place with boundless opportunities for fun activities:

There's places ye can go and that. Ye can go up tae Pilton Park (Figures 8.1 and 8.2), which is a big park. There's a play area, got a big field and that. And then you've got the neighbourhood centre which is next to it. Ye've got Morrison's just doon the road and ye've got, like the beach place (Figures 8.3 and 8.4) and that so ye can go doon there and muck about and that. It's really good...and we go out tae, like we muck about, it's like we used tae have scooters, like push scooters, and we used tae just muck about, trying tae learn new stunts...goin' oot and playing like. Goin', like, walks and shit like stuff. Doon the beach. Cos the beach is a massive place. Cramond Isle is just amazing.



**Figure 8.3: The beach/shore near Pilton**



**Figure 8.4: The view of the Forth bridges**

Standing (2014, p. 221) typifies 'street corner society' and 'hanging around' as 'leisure poverty'. I would challenge this. As in Deuchar's Glasgow study (2009), at least while at school, the friendships that young Piltoners forge in outside spaces can be important sources of support and social development. In line with MacDonald and Marsh's conclusions from their work in Teesside (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005), in Pilton, many young people's leisure activities consist of mundane activities such as meeting friends, chatting and just walking about. Some young people described fairly unstructured meetings with friends. Donald said, 'It's a bit hard to explain but round the corner there's a wall. We just basically sit there and just obviously have a laugh'. Helen said:

We walk about the street. Like, normally what we'd do is, we walk about the street for a while, find people tae come oot and then we'd go for a walk down the beach and then back up and then just sit about the park maybe.

Robinson (2000, p. 441) has suggested that street spaces can, simultaneously, offer young people 'resources in helping them construct identities, in the form of others using the space and physical aspects of the space'. Influenced by his experience of growing up locally and currently working as a youth worker, Tom asserted that unstructured meetings in the streets represent attempts by young people to be accepted by their peers. 'Hangin' about' on the streets is an important location for building social

networks, catching up on gossip, sometimes for flirting. Nora described the social mix on the streets but she regarded street-based socialising as a temporary activity which she had now left behind, although many of her peers continued to congregate:

Well, when I was 15 we were muckin' about, I dunno if you've noticed the shopping centre over there that's getting torn down, right. Well, that's where everyone stands and the junkies stand there during the day and the bairns stand there at night. And ah used tae just... hang about wi' them and we used tae just sit there all day. Then after about two weeks ae it, ah got bored and just stopped going out wi' them but I still talk to some ae them.

As in other studies (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; Robinson, 2000), the neighbourhood streets in Pilton are, at the same time 'special, safe, comfortable, useful and violent, scary and chaotic' (Robinson, 2000, p. 441). The emotional and social alliances that young people build on the street can include some blurring of boundaries between licit and illicit activities (Bottrell, 2007; Bottrell and Armstrong, 2007). Nora described young people and 'junkies', i.e. drug (mainly heroin), users sharing the same street-based spaces. Around half of the young people I interviewed described themselves as having personally been perpetrators of antisocial and criminal acts, with consequences for other people and for the environment. There were stories of street-based drug use, vandalism, arson and violence between different groups of young people. Patsy talked about networks of drug dealers. Staff talked about groups of young people who would steal and vandalise bicycles together or go shoplifting in the centre of the city. Standing (2014, p. 222) suggests that, for some young people, petty crime 'may provide a thrill that feels better than simply hanging around'. This would fit with the assertion by Fay, a youth worker, that young people's acts of petty theft and vandalism are carried out more for the excitement than to achieve material benefit:

Well there's a lot of stealing bikes. They're smashing cars. I mean, we've heard that they'll smash into cars if they see a few CDs or whatever. So they'll smash in and you think, I wonder what, are they using those CDs, if they want them, if they're selling them and they're just dumping them, cos they'll think, oh I don't want them anymore. And they'll steal bikes and they'll dump them.

For Karen, it had taken a stay in a police cell from a Saturday till a Monday for assault and breach of the peace, to make her change her behaviour: 'No. I couldnae handle getting in trouble again'. One of the more serious incidents described was Edgar's account of the circumstances that had led to him being convicted for possession of a dangerous weapon, a knife. He narrowly avoided being imprisoned, but he claimed that he was innocent of any intention to harm anyone. Like several others, Quinn described engaging in such behaviours like a rite-of-passage, left behind, hopefully before being taken into custody: 'when I turned 16, I realised that it would stay on my record for life and I could end up in prison for it'. However, and also like others, Quinn's accounts of reform might possibly have been aspirations, genuine enough, but his behaviours may have continued:

Before I turned 16, I used tae get intae trouble with the police a lot and that. Since I turned 16 I've only got two criminal records now but before that I was pretty immature, running around causing trouble, just like, smashing windaes and daein' stuff like that, tryin', mucked around in a wee gang.

Stephen and Squires (2003) have documented elsewhere how vehicle taking can be seen as an example of individual agency by socially-disadvantaged young men. One young man, Rob, said that he had been charged by the police 30 or 40 times and he described countless episodes of fighting and violence between young people in a fairly self-destructive manner. Another, Tom, contrasted young people's general acts of vandalism with what he seemed to regard as acceptable example of direct action when the same young people vandalised an abandoned office



block, Pilton's BT Tower, that had been earmarked for several months for demolition by the authorities. These acts could be regarded as what Stephen and Squires (2003, p. 147) call 'a vehicle for the production of meanings, status, identity and excitement' for the young people who engage in them. Whether or not, in this instance, the young people's actions could reasonably be considered as legitimate political protest is dubious. Nonetheless, Tom suggested that their actions contributed to the building eventually being taken down:

The BT building's, you know, if you go up Muirhouse Green, and you get to the top, before you get to the playing field at Craigroyston, there's that building tucked away on the left, that's the old BT building. They've kept setting fire to that regularly, every other night...there's quite a few of them, they've been stealing bikes, doing all sorts, they've upped the ante to the point where they've got a lot ae charges...they just didnae like the building. So they wanted rid ae it, they just kept daein' it. In the hope that eventually it'll go up. It'll go doon. But the guys at the BT were told that would happen for leaving the building empty and they did nothing about it until the point, the police were called every night, and they eventually demolished it last year. That had been going on for about 6 months.

### **'Gangs'**

Any group of young people on the streets can be labelled negatively as 'gangs'. From research in London, Parkes and Conolly (2013) argue that young men adopt codes of behaviour that might appear threatening to others, so as to avoid danger to themselves, but they caution against naming these behaviours as gang-related. As in Deuchar's (2009) Glasgow-based study, most young people in Pilton reject the 'gang' label for themselves or others. Some staff and young people asserted that a gang culture had existed in previous decades but few believed that there were organised gangs any more. Nora suggested that there had been

gangs when she was younger, with names ascribed to them, such as 'Young Pilton Derry', with the reference to the Northern Ireland town of (London)Derry, indicating that there had been a sectarian element in their identities, but she reported that 'aw them got the jail'. She acknowledged the anti-social behaviours of some contemporary groupings, including setting fire to cars and having 'one fight with the MCF<sup>8</sup>'. However, she said that she 'wouldnae class them as a gang cos they're all wee bairns', just unruly and destructive children. Vincent and Willie dismissed the idea that the younger teenagers, about whom many people complained, could be accorded the social status that naming them as a 'gang' might give them. Willie told me, 'There's no gangs in Pilton. If it is, it's all the wee boys'. Vincent confirmed this: 'No, there's not that organised gangs...it's typical wee fannies'.

Although 'gangs' might not exist, some sense of territorial competition between 'Piltoners' and 'Muirhousers' continues from previous decades in the street battles that erupt every year at 'Bonfire' or 'Guy Fawkes' night, 5<sup>th</sup> November. While the research was being conducted, a confrontation led to the destruction of a valuable local resource, a new all-weather basketball pitch. A local policeman, Ian, was horrified:

You've got a £200,000 basketball court that yeeze vandalised...or they just decided to put three big bonfires in the middle of it...yeah, it's like a challenge tae. It's went back tae the fifties when Muirhouse and Pilton never got on. The fights and everything. And that's just the way it is. And it's tradition, kind of thing.

I witnessed the smouldering ashes on one of my first visits to the scheme. These destructive activities contrast with the fond memories of Bruce Johnstone from the 1950s, though the historical activities also caused physical damage to the surroundings:

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<sup>8</sup> Muirhouse Casual Fighters.

My recollection of Guy Fawkes Night, as a youngster in the 1950s, was of assisting the older boys to build a bonfire on the corner of Pilton Gardens and Pilton Crescent – on the road surface. Altogether, there might have been – four bonfires around the park. I remember dragging tree branches all the way from a Nursery off Arboretum Road – now Edinburgh Academy Primary School. Ours was always the largest bonfire – or so it seemed. As the fire died, we would place ‘tatties’ in the embers and then eat our version of baked potatoes. I remember some ‘Teddy Boys’ coming once, in their creepers. They removed the stakes from the staked trees in the Park and threw them on the fire.

As Holligan and Deuchar (2009) describe from research in Glasgow, the destructive outcomes from acts of vandalism may appear pointless and disastrous but they can also provide bonding social capital (Gewirtz et al., 2005) among the perpetrators. It is noteworthy that the annual fighting is ritualised in a set of customs that are generally understood, at least by some participants. These acts of vandalism might be understood by some, in some sense, as a positive celebration of a continuing local culture, were it not for the fact that, as Tom explained, there were some very dangerous actions going on. This included putting lit fireworks in bottles and throwing them at people. The momentary, bacchanalian, excess also had the unfortunate consequence, for the whole community, of destroying the valuable resource of the basketball pitch.

### **Daily experience at PYCP**

For many of the young people in this study, the environment of PYCP provides what Healy (2003. p.69) refers to as a ‘supportive context within which to accomplish the challenges of daily living and which enable human flourishing’. In Pilton, the local youth services provide support and relative safety for young people even into their early twenties. This differs from Teesside, where people reported moving on from using youth services at an earlier age (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005). A young man in Teesside,

Richie, is reported as saying, ‘you can’t go into a youth club at seventeen! ‘Cos they’re all young ‘uns, aren’t they?’” (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005, p.71). The fact that young Piltoners could continue to use the youth services enabled them, to some extent, to avoid ending up, as Richie had, moving leisure activities onto the streets.

The physical space of PYCP is such that the centre feels larger inside than it seems from the outside. I also noted that the centre resembles the geographical nature of the scheme; surrounded by roads; you would have no reason to go in and see what is going on in the scheme, unless you had business there. Likewise, you would not be aware from the outside of the range of activities going on inside PYCP. Figures 8.5 and 8.6 provide outside views of PYCP, while figures 8.7 – 8.10 show some of the activities that typically take place inside the centre.



**Figure 8.5: Front view of PYCP**



**Figure 8.6: Back view of PYCP**



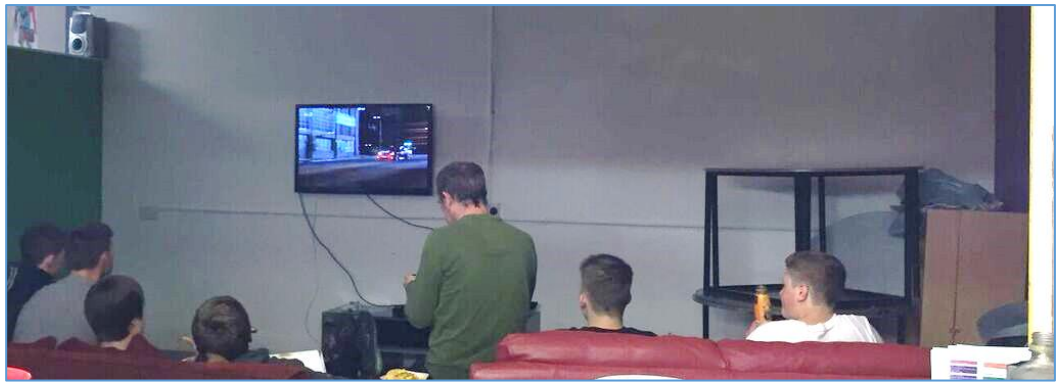
Figure 8.7: Cooking together at PYCP



Figure 8.8: PYCP Halloween party



Figure 8.9: Playing pool at PYCP



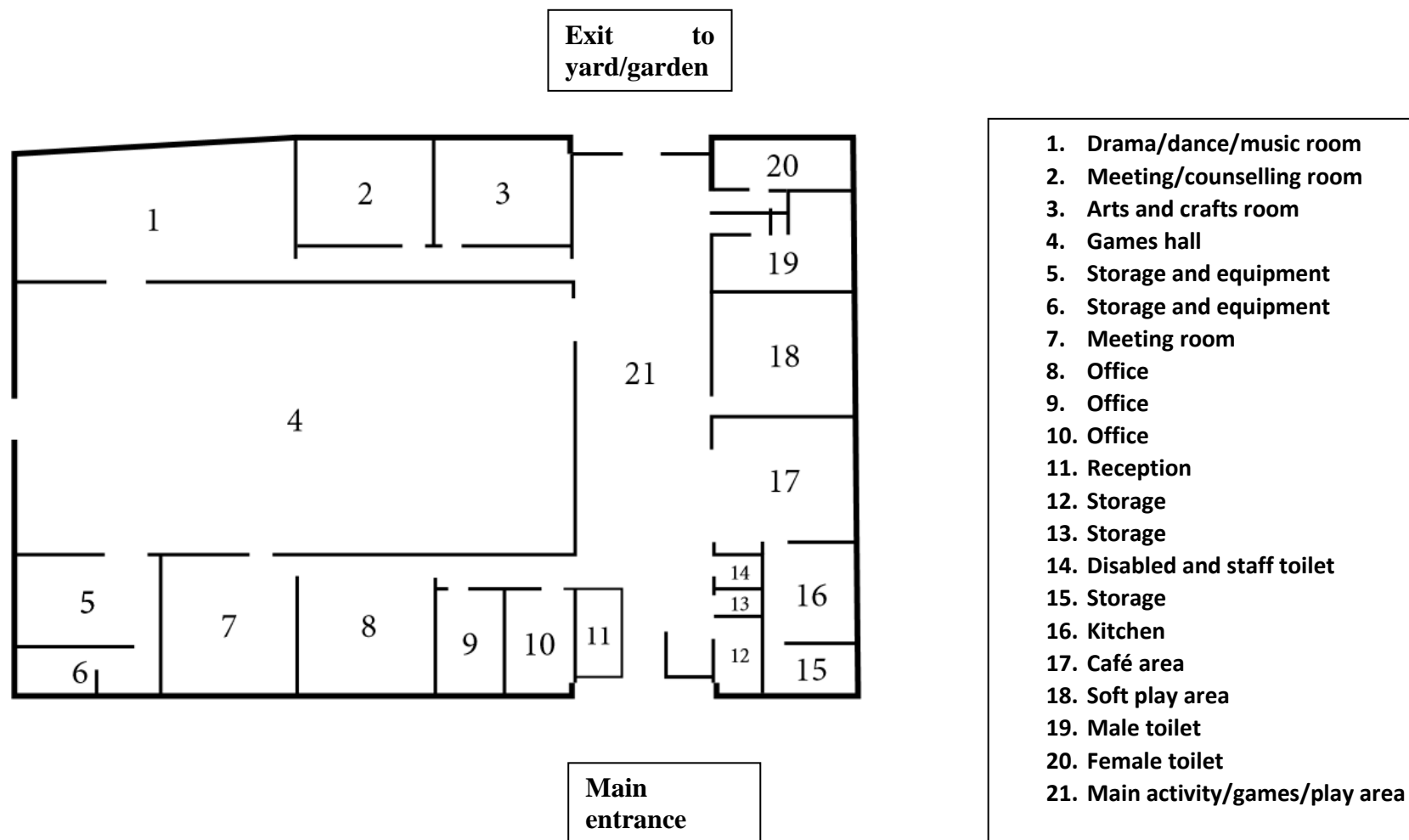
**Figure 8.10: Playing with the X-Box at PYCP**

The lay-out of the centre is shown in Figure 8.11. Young people enter through the main entrance and most of the activities that I observed took place in the main activity/games/play area (21) and the café area (16). At the same time as these activities were going on, there would always be some young people, mainly men, kicking a ball about in the games hall (4). From time to time, the drama/dance/music room (1) is used for special events, such as the Halloween and Christmas parties, where I observed young people performing on the stage. All of the interviews that I carried out took place in the meeting/counselling room (2), which is usually a quiet space where we were not disturbed. The mothers' group discussions took place around a table in the café area (17). In the main activity/games/play area (21), there is a small space to the left just after the reception which was usually cordoned off and where some small group activities and discussions took place. There were two televisions, one in the café area and one in the main activity/games/play area (21), as well as CD players. These were often played concurrently and there were always many young people shouting and running around. It was therefore a very noisy environment. The snooker/pool table was in the middle of the main activity/games/play area (21) and the table-tennis table was towards the rear. On one summer evening, the back door was opened into the yard, where some young people were doing handicrafts. The roof of the building was made of corrugated iron. Occasionally, young people would throw boulders onto it, which created noise and sometimes damage. During the

winter, there were several times that rain came in, causing damage to the floor of the drama/dance/music room (1).

Figure 8.11

## PILTON YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S PROJECT: FLOOR-PLAN





Henderson et al. (2007, p.32) contrast what they call young people's 'spectacular presentation' as a moral panic in the media and the more mundane reality of their private lives. The latter description typifies what I observed at PYCP. Most of the time, most of the young people simply seemed to be having a nice time with their friends. Activities included cooking, making art, putting on make-up and doing nails (mainly young women), playing snooker and table tennis or football (mainly young men). It also included what young people themselves describe as 'muckin' about', teasing each other, running up and down, sometimes with male-female flirtation in the mix. Different parts of the building seemed to belong to different groups. The make-up and art sessions often took part in the café area (16), sometimes in the seated area towards the front of the main activity/games/play area (21). The games hall (4) was almost always dominated by young men, playing football, and few young women ventured in there. Tasks such as cooking were carried out by both young men and young women in the kitchen (16).

Young people's participation in events at PYCP interlinks with other social activities beyond the youth centre. For example, on one evening, the session was short as there was a football match and an 'Eastenders' 'special' on television that young people would want to see. If the weather was good, young people often preferred to play outside rather than to come into the centre and sessions on warm summer days were poorly attended. On one hot summer day, young people had been training for a triathlon all day and so only ten young people came in. On Halloween night, only five young people turned up but there were many young people walking about the streets in fancy dress and I was told that there would be many house parties taking place. Two of the young people were telling the workers that they were taking the 'wee ones' out 'guising', the local equivalent to what Americans call 'trick or treat'. The centre was closed for some weeks in the summer, except for special day activities and Wednesday evenings. In the course of the research, some new funding was attracted to enable some Saturday openings. Every session includes

provision of free food, indicating recognition by the management that ensuring that young people are fed is a concern.

The findings of this study challenge Standing's assertion that, 'working class 'leisure careers' have been lost...due to an erosion of social institutions' (Standing, 2014, p. 222). As well as PYCP, there are many organised activities for young people in and around Pilton, including through the neighbourhood centres, youth centres in neighbouring districts, some voluntary sector organisations and at the local Craigroyston Community High School. As well as offering a (usually) safe space to play, meet friends and to learn skills and receive guidance and support from youth workers and their peers, PYCP actively encourages older young people to become volunteers as part of their transition to adulthood. Andy found that, as well as helping him develop coping strategies with the bullying he had experienced at school, he gained self-confidence and skills from volunteering, so that he could act as a resource for other young people:

So it's changing fae me sortae being the one that's getting sortae the support to being the one to give support in a way.

Steffi also described PYCP as a haven of escape from the abuse and threats she experiences at home and on the streets of Pilton. She appreciated the sense that adults regarded her as 'mature' that being trusted to be a volunteer gave her:

I used to come to the clubs and take part in the activities and things. And then I got, they knew how good I was and things, so I got offered to be a volunteer...I like better being a volunteer.

By moving young people into volunteering roles, as well as giving them experiences that might help in finding paid work, the youth centre supports young people to create new adult identities. Some young people continue to volunteer over a long period, whereas for others, it is a temporary stage

before they decide to move on from this context. This moving-on tends to take place at an older age than is described in MacDonald and Marsh's Teesside study (2005). However, although young people in Pilton continue to use youth-focussed services and gain a sense of security from them, some feel ambivalent about this. Uri expressed regret about not coming to PYCP as often as he used to, but his friends had stopped coming. Other 'adult' pursuits, such as getting a girlfriend, had also intervened to sever the connection with PYCP. Uri reported, with some sadness:

None ae my pals come here any more, so there's no point in coming. Like, I used tae come tae play football and that. But ever since I've had a girlfriend and none ae my pals coming in the evening. They used tae come in and get a game ae football and that, used tae be quite a lot ae us but everyone stopped coming.

My feelings about PYCP alternated. Sometimes the despondency and resignedness of some young people overwhelmed me, while at other times, such as special events like the Christmas party, the energy and excitement were infectious. When the Christmas performance was being staged in the drama/dance/music room (1), some young men in the games hall kept banging a football against the outside of the door. Staff said that they were going to lock the doors so that the others could 'perform in peace'. There was a mixture of emotions - optimism, anger and joy, all at the same time. I noted that the transitions that young people negotiate include moving away from the youth centre, the people they care about, who care about them and into a more risky, possibly less caring adult world. It opens up again the risks of their childhoods. Their transitions can be typified as moving from risk in childhood to peace at PYCP to risk again in adulthood.

## **Sex and risk**

The period when young people begin to develop adult sexual identities is an important marker of transition to adulthood. In this, as in other areas,

young people's explorations and relationships are complex and dynamic, pleasurable, risky and painful. In their sexual attitudes and behaviours, the decisions that young people in Pilton make are influenced both by their interpretations and responses to social and cultural norms, influenced by their networks as well as their personal agency.

According to Elaine, a youth worker, young people in Pilton tend to become sexually active between the age of thirteen and fifteen. PYCP therefore prioritises giving out information and access to condoms. However, young people in Pilton often espouse very conventional positions in relation to sexual behaviour, while they themselves act in ways that are quite contrary to these and, at the same time, are judgemental about other people's perceived moral breaches. Turner (2004) found that young women believed that teenage motherhood could limit a young woman's freedom and curtail relationship prospects, requiring her to mature emotionally. She also found (Turner, 2004) that it was a role that could stigmatise a young woman and have a range of negative implications for her child. Despite this, in Pilton, pregnancy seems to be a risk that some people, male and female, either do not perceive or that they are prepared to take.

Two of the young women, Irene and Karen, were pregnant at the time that I interviewed them. I also interviewed Rob, who was Karen's partner. Vincent's girlfriend had just had a miscarriage when I interviewed him. Another young man, Uri, told me that his girlfriend had become pregnant recently and had an abortion. They had kept this secret from their families. He had been worried about her mother's reaction – 'Her mum would have punched, she would have battered, she would have burst me' and he said that he had now learned the lesson to 'put something on the end ae it'. There was a strong sense of conservative moral judgement about others' perceived sexual irresponsibility. For example, Uri believed that other young people were less responsible than he was:

They're the same age as me. I could name 10 or 15 people that

have been pregnant. I ken, a couple ae my pals, they've got their girlfriend pregnant, and they've had miscarriages and, like, no even a month later, they're pregnant again. So I dinnae, I told him he was, like 'Aye, I've learned my lesson and that'. He goes and does it again.

This social conservatism was also evident in the attitudes of some staff. For example, Hazel, a youth employment adviser described as 'horrendous' the fact that one of her male clients who was twenty-two years old had a fourth child on the way, with three different mothers. She seemed even more horrified at the fact that 'he is still getting regular sex'. Hazel's reaction to this situation contrasted with the attitude of one of the pregnant women in the study, Karen, who, although she was not with the father, was now thinking practically that the fact that he already had two children with two other women would be useful in terms of their co-parenting: 'He's got two kids already. So he kinda knows what he's talking about and stuff'. Whereas Hazel's attitude was influenced by a cultural norm against perceived 'promiscuity' and 'irresponsible' parenting, for Karen, moralistic judgement was less important than working out practicalities for child rearing.

As well as this, unprotected sexual behaviours could open people up to the risks of acquiring blood-borne viruses, including HIV, which had affected this neighbourhood so drastically in the 1980s. There were some stories of young men having sex with possibly vulnerable women (and putting themselves at risk) in relationship and commercial sex contexts. Fay described a situation where a group of young men were having unprotected sex, clearly a risk for blood-borne viruses, with a local sex worker who was also a heroin addict. This episode, with the young men daring each other to perform sexually, might fit with Henderson's assertion (2007) that, perhaps, especially in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, status for young men can come from cultivating a sexual reputation. Fay described the complexity of the situation, suggesting, in addition to the

health-related risks, that there was a likelihood that the minors possibly had more power than the adult:

A lot ae young guys, the issue there was that they were having sex wi' a female who was a prostitute and a heroin addict, which, she was letting them all into her flat and stuff. And the thing is, they were daring each other tae dae things, they werenae using anything [condoms], at the same time, getting across tae thaim that, yes, she could be charged for that but she's a vulnerable adult who, you're taking advantage ae her as much as she's, not even taking advantage of you, I was saying, I don't think she's even consciously there, wi' half the things that are going on at the time. So if anyone, I think she's the most vulnerable oot ae the whole group here.

As the examples outlined show, in their sexual behaviours, the power relations between young people and others with whom they interact are complex and dynamic. The choices they make influence themselves and others around them.

### **Substance use**

Making choices in relation to substance use can be regarded as a behavioural marker of transition to adulthood, which brings both opportunities and risks. In Chapter Three, I discussed the emergence of heroin use in Pilton in the 1980s and its legacy, including the spread of HIV and a stigmatised reputation, which continues to this day. Therefore, it seems appropriate to pay specific attention to young Piltoners' attitudes and behaviours in relation to use of drugs and sex as part of the exploration of young people's leisure lives. I have included discussion of alcohol as well as illicit drugs, as alcohol is more widely used and causes more harm than drug use. The latest SALSUS reports on alcohol use (NHS Scotland, 2014a) and drug use (NHS Scotland, 2014b) were based on the national survey undertaken in 2013 with participants being mainly 13 or 15 years of age. I will focus on the findings that relate to 15 year

olds. Although the participants in my study are older than this, I believe that comparing the national study with what young people in Pilton reported is still useful in providing a sense of behaviours of (mainly) teenagers in relation to alcohol, as a drug which they are not yet permitted to buy, and drugs, which are totally illegal. Finally, I will discuss young people's attitudes and behaviours towards sex, including some of the risks associated with experimentation.

## **Alcohol**

According to SALSUS, across Scotland, 77% of 15 year olds report that they think that it is okay for someone of their age to drink alcohol (NHS Scotland, 2014a). This is in line with my findings in Pilton, where young people reported having a range of alcohol-related experiences in different contexts over time. As young teenagers, some young people described drinking in outside spaces with friends and with alcohol having been bought by older young adults. Some sought permission from their parents or carers and began their alcohol 'careers' by drinking alongside them. For example, Steffi was not a regular drinker but she would have a drink with her mother at Christmas or on her birthday, 'just an odd wee blue Wicked<sup>9</sup> and that's it'. Helen would ask her 'auntie', with whom she lived, if she could have a drink with her friends.

The 15 year olds in the SALSUS survey most commonly drink alcohol at parties (NHS Scotland, 2014a). This is typical also of the young people in Pilton; rather than Steffi's description of drinking with her mother, it is commonplace to drink with friends, with initiation beginning in early teenage years. Nora believes that she was a 'late starter' at age fifteen. She described the joy of drinking at house parties – 'the person will be, like, it's just us having a drink, naeone else and then everyone would invite everyone and, that was good'. Nora also described how, when, aged

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<sup>9</sup> A vodka-based 'Alcopop'.

between fifteen and sixteen, she would drink every day at the home of a pregnant friend - 'It was, I dunno, it was fun but I wouldnae do it now'.

A Scottish Government briefing describes the evidence of the link between affordability of alcohol, consumption levels and resultant harm: 'Put simply, as alcohol becomes more affordable, consumption increases; as consumption increases, harm increases' (Scottish Government, 2014c). However, whereas the SALSUS data does not find a relationship for the majority of 15 year olds between price and the type of alcohol people drink (NHS Scotland, 2014a), this differs from Pilton where people talked about the relationship between how much money they had and how much they drank. Commonly, people said that they would drink until their money ran out, selecting the cheapest drinks. For Tom,

There could be some nights when ye'd get a crate between yeese, some nights when everyone had enough cash to get a bottle of vodka as well.

Most of the young people described their early experiences of experimentation with alcohol as joyful, but transitory, group experiences with friends. The preferred drinking venue for Tom when he was younger had been a local park, where he and his friends could be out of the gaze of parents and not run the risk of having a house getting wrecked during the proceedings. He talked about his experiences nostalgically; these were rite of passage experiences, the memories to be savoured:

Cos we were that generation, no one had a free house, so it was just, we'll go and sit in the park. If anyone had a free house, it'd get demolished. And everybody knew that, so nobody ever owned up if they had a free house. Until end ae the night and somebody was looking for a place to crash. Didn't want to go home – which happened quite a lot as well.



Wherever people drink, they always described it as a group activity, bonding friends together, and, as they age, drinking venues change. Many young people begin to explore adult drinking venues, such as local pubs or pubs and clubs in the centre of Edinburgh. Differences emerge between those - usually the same young people who described other activities, such as attending college and have social networks outside Pilton - who become consumers in the city's night-time economy, often in the centre of the city - and people like Karen, who moved from drinking in the streets to a local pub - 'Everybody started drinking in there and then it just became a local big thing, we aw used to, you know, we would go in the pub, you know'. The choice and location of venues reflect broader social differences between the young people, some of which may of course have pre-existed. For example, Leona's drinking behaviour was similar to Karen's in that it was now pub-centred. However, whereas for Karen, the local pub ensured continuity of friendships centred around the locality where she had grown up, Leona's nights out provided new 'bridging' social capital, opportunities to mix with and create a new identity as part of a 'student' crowd, with other young people from a range of backgrounds from across the city:

The Nest. On Craigie Street. It's cheap and that's how we go there because most of us are students, Uni, College, whatever it is, we're all skint. All the time. So we go there. But we don't go there really regularly. Because it's cheap. But because it's cheap, we get a lot, we buy a lot of drinks.

Willie is one of the few young men who talked about how important dress, appearance and conspicuous consumption was for him in his identity presentation to others. Physically, in contrast to almost all of the young men in this study, he had a very smart, well-groomed appearance. In several comments that he made, Willie indicated that he felt a sense of superiority over the people who lived around him. He was pleased that his parents had sent him to Saint Augustine's High School, outside Pilton, telling me 'It's full of all the wee razzies about here'. His leisure activities included playing golf 'with either my father or friends. I'm a member along

in the golf club'. Like Leona, Willie had begun to socialise in the pubs and clubs in the centre of Edinburgh. However, whereas Leona described developing a new identity based on hanging out with 'student-types' in 'student-type' bars, he accorded more importance to being in settings where he could demonstrate conspicuous consumption. He would dress up. Being noticed, especially by the opposite sex, seemed important to him – 'We kindae know what the girls like, eh, you know what I mean?' Willie frequented pubs and clubs where he could flash his money about and make sure that everyone saw it. He boasted about the amount of money that he would typically spend on a night out – more than £100 was not unusual.

Aw, I drink a lot, aye. I do drink a lot. I'm out partying every weekend. Up town. I would only go, Sportsters Bar, don't know if you know where that is. I was at the Amber Rose. Then I went to Bar Soba. Then I went to Mood. And that was just on Sunday there. I would just go all places...spend about £120.

As he was not working, I asked Willie where he got this kind of money from. He said that his parents gave it to him.

## **Gender and Alcohol**

Skeggs (2002, p. 1) describes the intention of establishing a 'respectable' identity as 'one of the most ubiquitous signifiers of class' for young women. From an ethnographic study with 83 working-class women in North West England, she concludes that the different feminine performances that women make may have different implications for their subjective constructions. In line with this, presenting a 'respectable' image in Pilton influences young women to change their alcohol-related behaviours as they create adult social identities. For example, Leona, who was now attending college outside the district, separated herself from other Pilton people who would drink alcohol in public places. She repeatedly made excuses for the one time when she said she had drunk in a park:

I once drank in a park. But I'd never ever done that before...we were, it was my friend's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday see I was quite old. I wasn't the normal 14 year old doing it. I was 18. It was my friend's 18<sup>th</sup> but she didn't actually have ID yet. I swear, it was actually her 18<sup>th</sup>. I wasn't buying under-age...so, I went to buy something like (brand name), just so we didn't have to buy mixers, that's why we got that drink, we went to her auntie's house but her boyfriend at the time was, like quite near there so we went and met up with him so we didn't have to be in his house or our house, cause her house was quite crowded. We just met in a park. So that's when we done it. More for convenience than anything...I thought we were going to go to the pub or something. It was only she had no ID with her. Fine, okay.

Across Scotland, there are differences between the alcoholic products that young men and young women prefer to drink (NHS Scotland, 2014a). Of 15 year-old boys who had drunk alcohol in the previous week, 82% had drunk beer, lager or cider, compared to 58% of girls. In contrast, 76% of 15 year-old girls reported drinking spirits or liqueurs, compared to 55% of boys. This matches reports in Pilton where young men, such as Xander, talked about drinking beer,

If I'm on a night out, I wanna stay out, get a night out, so I just stick tae beers. But I can pace myself. But I now, if I'm, right, if I start tae get a wee bit wobbly, I'll stop, I'll get a couple ae waters. And then mibbee, if I feel a bit better, I'll go back onto it...oh I can drink, aye. A crate ae beer. Maybe twenty-two...a crate ae twenty. Stella.

while young women, such as Nora, prefer to drink spirits,

I would drink vodka and coke, shots, cocktails, anything. Jack Daniels and whisky. Jack Daniels and coke or Morgan Spice and coke.

## Risks associated with alcohol use

As indicated from the comments above, the amounts that young people drink, when they drink, far exceeds official guidance for adults (NHS Scotland, 2014a). The impact of many people in Pilton drinking too much is indicated in the fact that hospital admissions for alcohol misuse in West Pilton are around three times the Scottish average (Scottish Government, 2015a). According to SALSUS (NHS Scotland, 2014a), the median number of units that 15 year-old boys had drunk in the previous week was ten units, while for 15 year-old girls it was 8 units. The young people in this study were slightly older, so it is difficult to draw exact comparisons. However, there were many stories of 'binge' drinking. In how much they drink and their drinking patterns, many young Piltoners, male and female, are therefore taking risks with their health.

The concept of 'pre-loading' is explored in the alcohol literature (Forsyth, 2010; Foster and Ferguson, 2014). This involves drinking in a domestic environment before going out to pubs and/or clubs and it is a well-established practice among some young people in Pilton. For Xander, a good drinking session can last twenty-four hours. This involves starting in one place and then taking in various other drinking places over the period. He described a night out as involving moving drinking locations from a house to pubs and clubs and back to a house again, typically involving drinking and socialising over a twenty-four hour period. Patsy said that on a night out, 'you drink before you go out and then you go to a bar and then ye find a hoose party afterwards tae drink'. The 'pre-loading' might include, 'a litre ae vodka. A bottle ae wine. Apple sour shots' between a group of five people. After that, they would go 'up toon'. She would then have about four glasses of wine in a pub,

And then, ah'd be steamin' so, like, ah wouldnae even have a drink in a night club because I'd be that drunk that I'd know when to stop. Then when the night club finishes, you feel you're still starting tae sober up so ye'd go tae a party.

Aside from the health-related risks of consuming so much alcohol in a single session and the long term risks of chronic health harms, young people's alcohol-related behaviours carries other risks. Some young people described buying cheap alcohol – typically bottles of cider – and drinking it in the streets with friends. This could bring them into conflict with the police, as Karen, who had been in trouble with the police several times, discussed:

We used to, when we were fourteen, fifteen. You know, our wee bottle of White Star, White Star<sup>10</sup>...most of us used to drink in the street, that's what we would mostly get in trouble for with the police.

Chapter Ten discusses the association for some young people in Pilton between their own and/or others' consumption of alcohol and violence. There are also other risks associated with the purchase and consumption of alcohol by minors. This necessitates young people either using their networks to purchase alcohol when they are under age or getting to know the local shops who would sell to them. This kind of behaviour is reported in SALSUS where 58% of those who had ever drunk alcohol reported that they had persuaded someone else to buy alcohol for them in the previous four weeks (NHS Scotland, 2014a). Nora suggested that, even for a twelve or thirteen year old, alcohol is easily obtainable, from 'the corner shops who generally dinnae care about where they're getting' the money fae'. As well as the risks to young people's health and safety and the possibility of getting into trouble with the police, young people also sometimes make informal deals with adults where the latter buy them alcohol. By allowing the adult to do them the 'favour' of purchasing the alcohol, the young person becomes a 'lackey', the risk-taker in performing criminal activities, such as burglaries. Tom described such experiences:

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<sup>10</sup> A strong, cheap cider.

Some of the guys we went about with were older. They were the guys you would send to get the booze at the weekend. 'Do this, do that' and if you wanted anything thae guys would get you it and then you'd be the sorta lackey for the night. If they wanted something done, it'd be one of the younger guys would do it.

## **Drugs**

Seddon (2006) argues that in poor communities, engagement in the 'irregular' economy and drug taking can be viewed as a cultural response to create a meaningful identity and structure. According to SALSUS (NHS Scotland, 2014b), 37% per cent of 15 year-olds in Scotland report having been offered drugs and 40% think it would be 'very easy' or 'fairly easy' to obtain drugs if they wanted to. Many scholars (MacDonald and Marsh, 2002; McKeganey and Barnard, 1992; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009, 2007) have highlighted the co-existence of social disadvantage and high levels of drug use. The SALSUS figures (NHS Scotland, 2014b) seem low, compared to Pilton where in this study, young people, almost without exception, describe an environment where drugs are easy to obtain and commonly used, albeit by a minority of young people. One young woman, Karen, claimed that, 'if you know the right people, you get it for nothing'. Young people described buying and selling drugs such as 'drone' which, it was suggested by various young people, may have been mephedrone, ketamine or a synthetic cannabinoid, by text message and on Facebook.

West Pilton's admissions to hospital for drug-related incidents have been estimated to be seven times the national average (Scottish Government, 2009a). Compared to the national figures (NHS Scotland, 2014b), rates of drug use of these young people are high. Of twenty-six young people interviewed, 11 (46%) told me that they had ever used drugs. This compares with the SALSUS figure of 18% (NHS Scotland, 2014b). Across Scotland (NHS Scotland, 2014b), 15 year-old young men (19%) are slightly more likely than 15 year-old young women (16%) to report that

they have ever taken drugs. In this study, young men are also slightly more likely than young women to report having used drugs.

As with studies in Teesside (MacDonald and Marsh, 2002), young people exhibited a wide range of attitudes about their own drug use and that of others. This included several people making clear that they had not and did not intend ever to use drugs. With alcohol, there is a shared common experience across the sample of beginning to use, albeit with variations about age of initiation and context. With drugs, the marker is that they reached an age where it becomes clear that the market that exists around them is now open to them to join as active consumers. MacDonald and Marsh (2002) found that diverse sections of a youth population were orientated towards different forms of drug-using behaviour. In their study, they identified a minority of strong abstainers from all illegal drug use as well as others for whom drug use was a normal part of everyday life (MacDonald and Marsh, 2002). This is similar to Pilton. Young people exhibited a strong sense of personal agency, with the majority reporting never using drugs, but a significant minority indicating frequent use, notably of cannabis. Although young people in Pilton described operating in a context where drugs was around and available, young people who used drugs co-existed with young people who did not use drugs, the two networks rarely bothering each other, except on rare occasions, some examples of which I will give later. However, the existence of an active local drug market affects relationships between the police and young people on the street. Thus, for example, Quinn described what he considered to be an assault on him by the local drugs squad:

And then one time, I was walking past ma hoose and ah was on the phone and ah was standing at the corner and this woman comes up behind me, grabs me. Drugs Squad, saying I was acting suspiciously cos they'd done a raid in a hoose and they took ma phone and everything off me.

MacDonald and Marsh (2002) suggest that the boundaries between recreational and problematic use for young people in Teesside are loose. They (MacDonald and Marsh, 2002) argue that one reason why experimental drug use in poor communities may be more risky than the recreational use of drugs by middle-class young people is because the boundaries between 'recreational' and 'problematic' use in a socially disadvantaged context can be looser, leading to the use of what they call 'poverty drugs' such as heroin to achieve a numbing effect. They suggest that motivations for such use are different from the 'joyful' use of drugs such as ecstasy in other contexts. In Pilton, young people consistently expressed very negative attitudes about heroin users, stigmatising them as heroin users as 'junkies' and 'jakies', very different from themselves. However, here, as in Teesside, the boundaries for harm come close to them. Yvonne told me, 'When ye're walking past, they offer ye drugs and that', though she found it easy to refuse the offer. 'Junkies' and 'jakies' were a very visible section of the local population, especially in and around the shopping centre. Young people are aware of, and look down on them. However, they rarely described feeling threatened or intimidated or in any way affected by them. Uri described these 'others' with a degree of sympathy:

Really, I don't know how to explain it, they just look like a zombie. That's probably the best expression to put. Ye see, mair along where the centre is, along Muirhouse. You see them, ye see aw ae them there, at least at ten o'clock in the morning, cos when I'm at school and I'm coming, going tae get something tae eat and that, there's at least 15 ae them hangin' about there every day...What age do I think they are? In their forties, thirties, even twenties...I dinnae really know any ae them personally...they dinna come near you. Half ae them wouldnae really dae nothing anyway.

For Patsy, the 'junkies' are more a pathetic source of humour than a source of threat. She described how 'junkies' would steal things and then try to sell them at people's houses. She also indicated that her mother,



possibly with more knowledge of the context that these people have been through, tried to be sympathetic by buying some of the stolen goods:

It's all, like, all the junkies roond here that go into shops and steal shampoo and try and sell them at yer door...aye honestly. Aye, baking and that, nup, we're no gonnae buy cheese off the street...we're no gonnae buy cheese off the street. My mum's bought shampoo before and she says that she regrets it because now they always come to our door. And she's like, God's sake!

Young people rarely described peer pressure to use or not to use drugs. More typically, they suggested that they had friendship networks with peers who made similar choices as their own in relation to this. Donald explained that he and his friend abstaining from drug use and supported each other in their decisions because of what he regarded as the negative impact on individuals and their social functioning:

I've mucked about with other people that do take drugs and that and I've no done it. They dinnae pressure you intae that really. Like they would say 'Come on. Take it. Take it.' but if you just say 'Naw, ah'm no takin that', they'll be fine with that...the people that I muck aboot wi', they're aw against it as well, none ae them like aw that anyway...aye, ye see people just kind of walking about, no caring, police driving past them, just smoking the whole, everything, it's mental but I hate it.

Some of the young people, such as Grace, who expressed the strongest feelings about being 'against' drug use described experiences of problematic drug use within their families as influencing their attitudes and decisions:

I would never get intae any ae it...I'd say, cos of my past, like, all through my growing up, there've been like, drugs and that. So you dinnae want tae, like, get involved in what you've seen.

## Cannabis

Across Scotland, cannabis is by far the most commonly used drug (NHS Scotland, 2014b). This fits with Pilton feedback, where nine people out of 26 reported having used cannabis. Among those who frequently used cannabis, the benefits that they claim to gain from its use are couched in narratives of its numbing effect, not the stories of co-existing joy and risk that many describe when talking about the use of alcohol and some other 'recreational' drugs. Edgar described how he avoided the use of alcohol as he felt that it affected his moods and used cannabis on a daily basis as he believes that this helps him manage his diagnosed ADHD and his 'temper':

Some cannabis....every day...just tae really... wi' havin' the bad temper and the ADHD, it's harder to control, like, my ADHD than it is my temper. The cannabis just keeps me calm and just mellows. Ah dinnae really want tae jump aboot and do as much.

Cannabis users actively weigh up what they see as the benefits versus the costs of their use. Like many others, including several non-users, Rob asserted that cannabis was relatively harmless. He described the impact of the drug as having a sedative effect, which was good in terms of keeping him emotionally calm but his use could also be bad, in terms of making him feel lethargic and be inactive:

Well, it does keep me calm cos when I'm smoking it, I dinnae, ken, I dinnae want tae go out and cause trouble, I dinnae want tae – cos all I want tae, I just want tae sit and just dae nothing. Mind, cos that's what ye dae when ye smoke dope, you just mind yer ain business, just sit in your own company.

Rob located his reasons for using the drug within a narrative of not causing trouble for others. He sounded weary, as though it gave him some sense of peace in a troubling and risky environment. Vincent also described how the sedative nature of the drug might bring him respite and calm on an

individual level. However, his use was causing trouble within his family. As he began to think about adult life options, he felt that he had to stop using cannabis as the drug seemed to be inhibiting him from getting his life organised:

I've been 'clean' six months now...because ae my job that I was meant tae be starting and it was causing a lot of trouble in my family. So my mum and dad were starting tae break doon. So ah though tae maself, what am ah wanting tae do when I'm 26 years old, when ah have bairns. Am I gonna sit in my bedroom? Ken what I used tae do, I just used to sit and smoke joints all my life. Nah, no for me.

Vincent's use of the word 'clean' was unusual, compared to other young people's cannabis narratives. More commonly, cannabis was viewed as an acceptable or at least, 'low risk' drug and descriptions of 'dirty' drugs and 'dirty' drug users were usually reserved for the comments that people made about street heroin users, who typically hung around the local shopping centre. As in Green et al.'s (2000) study, young people in Pilton who smoke cannabis and, possibly occasionally, take other 'recreational' drugs tend to be moralistic about such others, categorising them as more 'out of control, dangerous and thus totally different to them (Green et al., 2000, p. 123). Thus, as Green et al. argue (2000), young people's perceptions of acceptable/unacceptable acts are grounded within an experiential code of behaviour rather than a society's legal code. In his interview, Vincent described a history of depression and mental health problems. There is good evidence of links between mental health problems and cannabis use, although whether there is a related causality is disputed (Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, 2006). There is therefore a possibility that some of Vincent's mental health problems may be exacerbated by his cannabis use.

## **‘Drone’**

Whereas according to the SALSUS study, very few pupils reported using any drug other than cannabis, no more than 2% in any category (NHS Scotland, 2014b), in Pilton, several young people who disclosed drug use often talked about using other drugs, such as cocaine and ‘drone’. Perhaps one of the riskiest health-affecting activities was young people’s tendency to ingest substances, obtained from illicit sources, without knowing what they contained. According to Karen, who claimed to have used cocaine and ‘drone, risks of taking an unknown substance were reduced if you knew the dealer – ‘if you trust that person, you know it’s alright’. In line with SALSUS (NHS Scotland, 2014b), even among poly-drug users, few young Piltoners describe their own drug use as problematic. However, several people talked about experiences that had caused them concern and influenced them to desist from using. For example, Oonagh described a disturbing experience with what she called ‘drone’:

Horrible. And I’ve, like, I tried it once because, like, all ae ma friends were doin’ it and then ah just seen the way everybody was reactin’ on it so sorry ah...it was just like weird like, I dunno...it makes you feel paranoid. Like you feel like someone’s talking about, people are talking about you. It’s so horrible. So I’d never take that ever again.

This was only one of several accounts of problems with ‘drone’, whatever it is. Nora talked of a New Year party, where ‘everyone was on drone so I just left. It was horrible’. Patsy described a friend whom she claimed had become ‘addicted’ to ‘drone’, with dangerous consequences:

She actually ended up getting addicted tae it...and she’s ended up having to go to hospital, get put on a drip and all her lips were blue and – now she doesn’t take it but it came frae just being a random few, here and there, weekend things tae her actually wantin’ it all the time.

Vincent described 'drone' as being used by the younger teenagers, whom he deemed to be out of control:

All these fourteen year olds that are partying...All these people that are house partying and that. Ye'd find a house at the weekend and they can party in it. Boom!...they're all flying about on it...You can tell a mile away they're on it...Their eyes are whoo hoo (whistles)...It smells like cat's piss mate. Naw genuinely, it does smell like cat's pissing and it's just disgusting and a vulgar drug that I would never ever go near in my life.

Although such accounts may be exaggerated and influenced by tabloid scare stories as well as the moral approbation that these young people sometimes liked to accord to others' behaviours – thus, for example, Vincent's description of the alleged smell of the drug and his consequent insistence that he would never stoop so low as to use it.

### **Other drug-related risks**

Use of illegal drugs presents risks to personal health and safety. As well as this, the fact that certain drugs are illegal means that young people who use or supply them run the risk of getting a criminal record, with the resultant impact that could have on their long term opportunities, including in the areas of employment, finance and travel. Some young people also describe how becoming adult in a drugs market occasionally meant that you could unwittingly stumble into very dangerous situations. Mark told of a drug-related situation which included him being threatened with a knife. Mark suggested that other people had thought that he might be involved with drugs because of his race. He described how another young person tried to recruit him as a drug dealer, an option he told me he turned down:

I'm a passin' and I'm a 'Man, weed, it's always smelling of weed, man, what's up with you?', cos, like, 'Do you want some?' I didn't

want some back then. I went 'Nah'. I was, like lowering my head, this guy who can get me stuff, he came, 'If you want you can move it'...I was working different hours. 'If you're not working, man, there's a guy can give me stuff to move and shit.' I was like 'naw, awright'.

## **Conclusions**

This Chapter has considered leisure transitions of young people in Pilton, noting the importance of these changes as markers of new, adult identities. First, I discussed leisure contexts of young people, specifically paying attention to the home, the street and the youth centre, PYCP. I then moved on to consider how options, for example, about sexual experimentation, alcohol and drug use provide opportunities to develop new, adult identities, with potential risks as well as pleasures, and sometimes in new contexts.

When they socialised at home, many young people described close bonding relationships with their families, including cooking together and watching television as a family group. By playing on line with people, who might even be in other countries, young people who might rarely venture physically out of Pilton, also described building on-line relationships with people who might even be in other countries. Facebook seemed mainly to be used for gossiping with friends in the locality. However, I would challenge the suggestion by Standing (2014) that this makes it a passive activity.

Outside the home, on the streets of Pilton and in its play areas, open spaces and nearby beaches on the Firth of Forth, young people have ample opportunities to build and develop friendships, to have adventures, to take risks, to be creative, to learn, to build and maintain social capital. Many young people have a lot of fun in these contexts, and I would challenge Standing's typification of 'street corner society' and 'hanging around' as 'leisure poverty' (Standing, 2014, p. 221). Simply because interactions are unstructured does not mean that they are not important

sources of social capital, providing opportunities for personal growth and development. There is, however, a sense among young people that, perhaps around the age of 15 or 16, you need to move on from street-based contexts.

As explored by Bottrell and Armstrong (2007), young people in Pilton balance at the same time their 'desire for conventional pathways and rewards' (Bottrell and Armstrong, 2007, p. 364) with the 'recognition that alternative rewards are readily accessible in marginal pursuits, despite the risks involved' (Bottrell and Armstrong, 2007, p. 364). As elsewhere, (Bottrell, 2007; Bottrell and Armstrong, 2007), street-based leisure activities can include some blurring of boundaries between licit and illicit activities. As in other studies, (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; Robinson, 2000), and discussed at length in Chapter Ten, there is evidence that hanging out on the street also carries risks that young people might become perpetrators and/or victims of crimes, including violent crimes. There is a street-based drug scene, mainly around the Pennywell shopping centre, which brings risks that young people might become involved. However, aside from the drug-dealing which goes on, there was not much evidence of organised gangs operating among and affecting young people. Despite this, young people on the streets can be labelled negatively as 'gangs', and perhaps because of this stigmatising, several young people described what they felt was daily harassment by the police. While the study was taking place, there was a battle between 'Piltoners' and 'Muirhousers', ritualised to take place every year at 'Bonfire' or 'Guy Fawkes' night, 5<sup>th</sup> November. A new all-weather basketball pitch. Similar to what Holligan and Deuchar (2009) describe from their study in Glasgow, I got a sense that young people were excited and energised by having taken part in these activities.

My observation sessions and most of my interviews with young people took place in the local youth centre, PYCP. The service provision at PYCP undermines Standing's assertion that, 'working class 'leisure careers' have been lost...due to an erosion of social institutions' (Standing, 2014, p. 222).

As discussed, unlike in MacDonald and Marsh's (2005) Teesside context, PYCP's services are available and used by many young people into their late teens and early twenties. This means that young people have access to a space off the streets, with a highly skilled and caring staff. Many young people in PYCP seem to have a lot of fun, playing football, snooker and video games with friends. There are organised group trips at various stages of the year. The style of service provision can be deceptively informal. Volunteering opportunities enable some young people to begin to think of themselves as adults, as well as gaining skills for employment. Opportunities to support vulnerable young people, and to discuss sensitive issues, such as sex and drug use, were planned into the centre's programme. It was also noteworthy that free food was provided, and consumed, during every session. Condoms were also provided for young people.

The period when young people begin to consider sexual activities, is an important marker of transition to adulthood. It was suggested by a worker that young people in Pilton tend to begin to consider becoming sexually active between the ages of 13 and 15. This seems to be around the same age that they begin to make decisions about alcohol and/or drug use. In each of these areas, young people's explorations and relationships are complex and dynamic, pleasurable, risky and painful. Their decisions are influenced by their interpretations and responses to social and cultural norms, their networks and their personal agency. However, regardless of their own behaviours and experiences, many young people espouse socially conservative attitudes about other people having sex, including the perceived irresponsibility of risking pregnancy. At odds with this, and in line with Kehily's findings from her research with young mothers (Kehily, 2014), some young pregnant women, although apparently not having planned the pregnancy, welcomed the opportunity to take on a new identity as a mother.

Making choices in relation to substance use can also be regarded as a behavioural marker of transition to adulthood, which brings both



opportunities and risks. Most young people in this study drink alcohol, and they associate it with both pleasure and risk. My findings suggest that some young people in Pilton may be risking health harms, from their own excessive alcohol use and the violent behaviours associated with their own use and that of others. Many people described alcohol as being a normalised component of social life, though the contexts and experiences related to drinking varied greatly, from quiet drinks with parents at home, to parties with bottles of cheap cider that usually ended in a fight.

Drug use is far less widespread than alcohol, though the figures are high compared to the national average (NHS Scotland, 2014b). As with studies in Teesside (MacDonald and Marsh, 2002), young people exhibit a wide range of attitudes about their own drug use and that of others, with attitudes ranging from highly abstinent to regarding drugs as part of daily life. Cannabis is the most commonly used drug, and it is generally regarded as relatively harmless or beneficial, in terms of reducing stress. New psychoactive substances, including what young people call 'drone', were also described as being readily available, but to be rejected. Street heroin users were consistently despised and derided by young people, but there was little sense that they posed any risk. However, the existence of an active street drug market did expose young people to risk of becoming involved in drug-crime related incidents and using drugs themselves.

Finally, from exploration of young people's leisure transitions, a complex picture emerges. In terms of meanings of what becoming adult means, for some, this equates with 'being responsible', possibly not having as much fun as before. Participation in the range of activities provided by local youth services and street-based activities were perceived as temporary and the sense was that one had to move on from these to become properly adult. For some young people, that is easy. They have become bored, for example, of hanging out on the streets. Some young people were already enthusiastically indulging in 'adult' activities such as having sex, drinking alcohol and taking drugs. However, there were usually mixed feelings. Becoming adult would entail disengaging from, or at least, reorganising

established friendships, and leaving the safety that youth centres such as PYCP, including its physical space, had provided. The ambivalence that young people feel is reinforced by their sense of marginalisation and stigma from the social contexts outside Pilton where it seemed that they might now have to venture. A few suggested that they would not move on. Some said that they were looking forward to new adventures.

I will now examine the phenomenon and lived experience of stigma for young people in Pilton. In doing so, I draw, in large measure, on the classic study of Goffman (1963), which emphasises that perceiving others or oneself as 'different' is at the root of what Goffman (1963) describes as 'disgraced' identity or stigma. Stigma is an attitude quite contrary to Elias' (1983, p.261) emphasis that we only make sense if we recognise our similarities and interdependence, that people are 'dependent on each other first by nature and then through social learning, through education, socialisation, and socially generated reciprocal needs' (Elias, 1983, p. 261).

I will draw on my fieldwork to discuss young Piltoners' own sense of feeling stigmatised by other, wealthier people in other parts of Edinburgh. I will suggest that the stigmatised often accept the negative judgements that others make of them (Goffman, 1963). I will provide a mini case study about an incident which I will call 'The Wall' incident and draw on discussion with a group of mothers which highlighted that in Pilton this might be the case. I will also highlight widespread attitudes of Piltoners to people within their own community who are cumulatively stigmatised, in particular, people perceived to have drug or alcohol problems – 'jakies' or 'alcies' - or to pose a threat to children – 'paedos', or 'bad' mothers. It is suggested that the attitudes and behaviours that many young 'Piltoners' exhibit towards new, mainly Polish, immigrants provide an indication of their own negative feelings about themselves and their community; they express negative opinions about the newcomers not because they feel superior to them but the reverse. This will be contrasted with Elias and Scotson's 1960s study of a working class community in 'Winston Parva', Leicestershire (Elias and Scotson, 1994), where newcomers were despised because they were perceived as being less respectable than the 'established' community. In my conclusions, I will emphasise the pervasive nature of stigma in affecting people's sense of themselves, their friends

and families, as well as their attitudes to people they regard as 'different' both within and beyond the neighbourhood.

### **Stigmatised Youth in Stigmatised Pilton**

For young people in Pilton, stigma is,

...a pervasive two-role social process in which every individual participates in both roles...The normal and the stigmatized are not persons but rather perspectives. These are generated in social situations during mixed contacts by virtue of the unrealized norms that are likely to play upon the encounter (Goffman, 1963, pp. 163–164).

As discussed in Chapter Three, in Pilton, stigma has had a negative impact over generations and up to the present day, affecting how young people construct their identities, how they view their neighbourhood, people around them and their relationships with outsiders. Stigma permeates the daily experiences of young people in Pilton. Consciously or sub-consciously, stigma affects how they feel about and relate to their networks of families and friends in Pilton, which, as discussed in Chapter Five, may be stronger here than in other, wealthier neighbourhoods. As discussed in Chapter Six, young people's experiences of developing adult identities includes a sensitivity to how others view them – this is made more difficult for young people here because of their sense of being judged negatively by others. Trying to find and retain a job, as discussed in Chapter Seven, is challenging enough in a highly competitive market where young Piltoners are disadvantaged; stigma makes this harder. Young people's leisure lives, discussed in Chapter Eight, are also affected by stigma; thus, for example, innocuous 'muckin' about' with friends on the street can be labelled as 'gang' behaviour.

Researchers (for example, McCulloch et al, 2006) have noted that the way people dress can be an important marker of identity and difference. They (McCulloch et al., 2006) carried out fieldwork in the centre of Edinburgh, in

areas frequented by many students. From this, they (McCulloch et al., 2006) argue that important features of a subculture include expressing a particular style of dress and being considered as a group by others outside the group. This study would support their contention that young people's dress in Pilton can mark them as being part of a cultural sub-group. Most young people in Pilton dress in similar ways, with track pants, usually grey, and sports gear. McCulloch et al. (2006) name young people such as these as 'chavs', with little reflection that by doing this, they label these young people in ways that the young people would not wish. This is very different from the other sub-groups they mention – Skaters and Goths – where young people actively choose that social label. As one young woman in Pilton, Patsy, told me, 'No-one would call themselves a chav. No way. Cos if they called themselves a chav ye'd be putting yerself doon'.

Goffman argues that, with the best intentions, what he calls 'normals' can reinforce feelings of stigma in others by social interactions, which make it clear how different they regard the others to be (Goffman, 1963, p. 29). In this study, an example of such an interaction came up in discussion with a group of mothers where one mother, Amy, talked about her experience of going to a friend's house outside Pilton for dinner. Her friend's mother behaved as though, coming from Pilton, she would not have been used to home cooking:

I had a friend at school and my mum used tae work with them so we all, my daughter, were friends. And she lives in a big house and she actually, her mum, I went for my tea to her house one night and her mum said to me, have you ever tasted stew before? I thought, she must actually think that because I come from Pilton, I've never tasted stew before. Of course I've tasted stew.

Amy also described how her father's sense of stigma had led him to refuse a journalist's request to interview her sister and herself when they graduated from University. He had felt, that rather than celebrating their achievement, by highlighting their achievements as exceptional, stigmatising attitudes by outsiders towards local people would be

reinforced:

When me and my sister graduated, the 'Evening News' phoned and my parents didn't want them to interview us because we were the first twins to graduate together in 12 years in our area. We were probably the only twins to graduate in 22 years. My dad refused because he said that that was putting the area down and that.

In interviews with staff in Pilton, the concept of stigma often arose when the neighbourhood and its occupants were described; less often in interviews with young people. I heard a number of accounts of how young parents conspicuously consumed by buying valued material goods for their children. Kehily (2014) has described how, for first time mothers, consumption can make visible the changes shaping maternal experience. She specifically suggests that, especially for poorer teenage mothers who feel stigmatised, displays of buying consumer goods can be used to demonstrate their fitness for motherhood. There were suggestions of such processes in play in Pilton. Barbara, a youth worker, suggested that, although people were poor, among young mothers there was a sense of being judged, 'a real competition', so that they ensured that their children got the 'right' trainers, the 'right' mobile phone. She posed the questions,

What does that mean about me as a parent, as a person? What does that mean about my child if I don't provide them with that? What lengths do people go to get to do that, to get that?

Barbara expressed surprise that people were able to afford expensive consumer goods so that their children could celebrate Christmas, implying that the goods had been stolen:

You know, they're not on a high income but when you get to Christmas time, there's six kids in the house and they all get, like, a laptop each and a 'Playstation' and a mobile phone and an I-phone and whatever and you're just like...where the hell has that come

from?

Another youth worker, Elaine, suggested that the consumer pressures on parents were so severe that they would sacrifice food for their families so as to make sure that their daughter had a stylish handbag:

It's a stupid thing, they think, because they would rather buy their daughter a 'Paul's Boutique' - money, money - a 'Paul's Boutique' bag so she disnae get bullied at school and have tae ration food for the rest of the week.

Unfortunately, such prioritising of conspicuous consumerism over provision of basic necessities for children, which is intended to show others that, contrary to their expectations, these young women are good mothers, may only reinforce previously held negative attitudes towards them.

### **Mini Case Study - The Wall'<sup>11</sup>**

Goffman (1963, p.161) argues that,

The stigmatized and the normal are part of each other; if one can prove vulnerable, it must be expected that the other can, too. For in imputing identities to individuals, discreditable or not, the wider social setting and its inhabitants have in a way compromised themselves; they have set themselves up to be proven the fool.

In her personal account of growing up on a council estate in Birmingham, Hanley (2012), suggests that policy makers over decades have deliberately segregated council tenants and neighbourhoods from the rest of the community. As a result, Hanley argues that council estates and the people who live there have consistently been stigmatised. Hanley talks about what she terms 'the wall in your head' (Hanley, 2012, pp. 148 – 184), a psychic barrier to advancement into other social spheres for young

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<sup>11</sup> These transcriptions have been edited from an audio recording of an informal group discussion with mothers in Pilton Youth and Children's Project which included a lot of noise, interruptions, people talking over each other and comments that did not relate to this issue.

working class people. In her introduction, she provides a historical account of 'The Cutteslowe Walls', that were established in 1930s Oxfordshire to separate off aspirational, newly home-owning working classes, 'terrified of the calamities that might befall them' Hanley, 2012, p.13) if they were forced to mix with people 'they considered smelly and uncouth' (Hanley, 2012, p.13) from neighbours in the local council estate:

They had scrimped and saved for a deposit, and they were damned if their postage-stamp gardens were going to be trampled on by barefoot kids who wouldn't know a bar of soap if they slipped on one ((Hanley, 2012, p.13).

Remarkable as it might seem, the Cutteslowe Walls survived for 25 years as a symbol of the stigma and social division (Hanley, 2012). In the course of conducting this research, an incident occurred that illustrated that such social tensions continue to this day between Pilton and more affluent neighbouring areas'<sup>12</sup>. I first heard about what I will refer to as 'The Wall' incident in a discussion session with a group of mothers at Pilton Youth and Children Project. They were discussing how they were bringing up their children and were emphasising that they wanted to lay out and enforce appropriate codes of social behaviour. By doing so, they believed that their children could have easier lives than they themselves had had to date. Several mothers, such as Amy, discussed their pride in how their children were performing at school:

See, it's when you get that wee feeling of 'Oh well, that'll be like that, this is my kid'. That's brilliant, that's sortae, 'My mum's proud ae me!'

The mothers were also aware that there could be a negative impact on their own children's self-esteem if they thought that their parents were denigrating the neighbourhood. Therefore, although Amy made clear that

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<sup>12</sup> 'The Wall' was geographically in Muirhouse, next door to Pilton but the affront to local people was felt by Piltoners and Muirhousers alike and the campaign against it involved both communities.



her plan was to leave Pilton when she could, she also talked about the importance of presenting a positive image to her children:

It's important that Shane (her son) doesn't see me stigmatising...we've run everything in Pilton down in the space of 10 minutes. So that's how, if the kids were listening tae this, as an earlobe listening, they'd be like, 'They've given up on us'.

The mothers discussed what had been a Council plan to build a wall across a footpath which was a main artery connecting Muirhouse/Pilton with the neighbouring Silverknowes area. This was in response to an act of vandalism having taken place in Silverknowes. A car had been set on fire and the presumption by many people in Silverknowes was that this had been done by a young person from Muirhouse or Pilton.

In Edinburgh, the Council backed down from its planned action, in response to campaigning from the Youth Forum and other local advocates. There are a range of, sometimes conflicting, stories about what happened. What Denscombe (2010) describes as multiple realities, subjectivity, description, interpretation and agency have contributed to my understanding of what happened. I tried to piece the story together, drawing on different people's accounts. Zara, who volunteers with Forth Youth Forum acknowledged that there had been anti-social behaviour by young people from Pilton and Muirhouse:

Basically, there had been some vandalism in Silverknowes, just across fae the footpath. Some people had had their windaes smashed, their cars keyed, tyres put down, windaes and stuff put through, just really, really stupid and immature things that kids have obviously thought was great fun and a laugh and really wisnae.

Whereas one mother, Carly, was outraged at what she considered to be the 'ridiculous' council proposal, another mother, Beth, accepted the blame that had been apportioned to local young people and argued that if she

lived in Silverknowes, she would also not want her children to mix with the Pilton and Muirhouse children:

I can actually understand that. I understand why. If I was living there, ah widnae want tae look out ma windae tae look at that...they're trying tae keep their kids away fae...cos ah ken if I lived there ah wouldnae want ma kids knockin' about doon here.

Beth supported the building of the wall as a move that would somehow insulate young people in Silverknowes from the young people from Pilton, who included her own children. Her attitude is in line with Goffman's (1963) thesis that stigmatised people tend to have the same beliefs about identity as those who stigmatise them. At the same time, as society tells them that they are members of the wider group, 'the special situation of the stigmatized is...that he is also 'different' in some degree, and...it would be foolish to deny this difference' (Goffman, 1963, p.149).

The incident brought to the surface historical tensions between the neighbouring communities. A local councillor suggested to me that contempt for Piltoners felt by Silverknowes residents was demonstrated by what he claimed was the common practice of the latter group in taking their dogs to defecate in Muirhouse. As a member of the Youth Forum, Tom campaigned against the proposed wall. He asserted that the act of vandalism which provoked the demand for the wall had been undertaken by someone from Silverknowes, not from the stigmatised communities. Tom argued that by supporting the building of the wall, councillors and officials were colluding in discrimination against the poorer communities. The councillor whom I interviewed asserted that, whatever had happened, the official response was a huge over-reaction, based on prejudice:

There was an emergency summit up here and so the councillors from Forth and Almond Ward, the chief inspectors of the police from the two wards, the council managers from each ward, the planning people about legislation. Eighty people came to this meeting to discuss one event with a couple of young people...But the people

who were organising it were just, in the main, they were careful about their words they choose but in my eyes they just did not want to see young people from Pilton and Muirhouse coming through their estate and wrecking it. These hoodlums and hooligans coming through...'Why are we wasting our time even talking about this?' I raised that so many times. 'Why are we wasting our time doing this? Because all it is doing is putting two communities against each other'...It was shocking that we even allowed that discussion to happen.

Ian, a local community policeman affirmed the perception of the councillor – 'it's totally snobs. Totally, totally snobbery'. Ultimately, this whole incident may be considered as an example of how 'normals' who live adjacent to settlements of the tribally stigmatized often manage quite handily to sustain their prejudices' (Goffman, 1963, p.70). The councillor pointed out that the issue highlighted the vulnerability that the people in Silverknowes had generated for their own social identities by stigmatising a group which lived and operated nearby. His advice to people in Silverknowes was:

Well, probably you shouldn't have bought a house there then. If you don't want to live beside Muirhouse then don't buy a house next to it. Don't buy a house in Muirhouse. Because that's where it is. You live in Muirhouse. Your street is called Silverknowes Eastway in Muirhouse and if you don't want to live in Muirhouse, don't move there.

### **Schools and beyond**

As well as being economically disadvantaged, students at the local Craigroyston High School tend to leave school with fewer qualifications than students elsewhere in Edinburgh (Education Scotland, 2012). The reasons for the differences cannot be dissociated from the social and economic hardships within the area. Despite school inspections which praise improved quality and consistency of teaching and learning

experiences (Din, 2015), the school is often regarded as inferior, both within and beyond the Pilton community. Schools outside Pilton are considered by many local parents *de facto* as presenting better social and educational prospects for their children than Craigroyston would. Few families from outside the local area opt to send their children to Craigroyston and, in this study, only 10 out of 26 young people spent their whole career at the local school. The selection of schools outside Pilton by local parents can be framed as a conscious reaction to stigma, a stab at providing opportunities for children to acquire bridging social capital by building networks outside the neighbourhood. Willie, one of the young interviewees, has lived in Pilton all his life and has a large extended family residing in the area. He attended St. Augustine's High School and he spoke in disparaging terms about Craigroyston and its pupils:

You wouldn't want to go to Craigroyston...it's full of all the wee razzies about here. Know what I mean, so they're just thinking, for a better life for yourself, you'll get a lot better education up there. Or so they said at the time...I don't think it's fair, but then again, if you're wanting to be top in a class when there's someone at the back ae ye, chucking rubbers at the teacher, how are you meant to do that?

At an individual level, sending children to schools outside the district might give bridging social capital and possibly enable them to achieve more in academic terms. However, going to schools outside the area presents some young people with challenges and conflicts – these actions also at the same time reinforce stigma about the local community by equating achievement and success as residing outside Pilton. Yvonne also attended St. Augustine's High School. She described how disempowered and stigmatised she had felt by the experience of school buses arriving late every morning to pick up people from Pilton and then sensing that she and the other young people were being judged and stigmatised unfairly by school administration staff when they arrived in school late:

It wis awright, aye, but it wis, ah disliked the travellin'. Cos we can't,

well, we can use the Lothian buses but we goat square buses. So if the teachers were, it wisnae kindae the teachers, it wis reception, they kept moaning, saying, 'Aw, youse are late' and stuff and, ken, we were like, 'Well, our buses huvnae turned up.' Ken, we've been waitin' for over an hour'.

It is clear that, regardless of Yvonne's behaviour, circumstances beyond her control – in this case, the organisation of the school transport – combined to reinforce the stigma she experienced. Some young people also described what Goffman refers to as 'dividing their spatial world...into different regions according to the contingencies embedded in them for the management of social and personal identity' (Goffman, 1963, p.104). This was borne out by one young person, Tom's, experience in going to the Royal High School, which he said was selected by his parents deliberately to move him away from the temptations of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour with local young people. He described developing a strategy to survive in the new school by keeping 'under the radar'. Living in one place and going to school in another meant that he had to plan to locate his primary social identity and to build his primary friendship group in different places. He decided that his primary friendship group would be at home rather than at school, but because he was going to the Royal High, he felt that he had to renegotiate his position within the local community. However, he suggested that his parents' decision was a positive one as his absence from Muirhouse/Pilton gave him the 'option to opt out of things' such as drug-taking. He was also able to take part in leisure activities at the Royal High which were denied to Craigroyston students. However, his friends at home drew his attention to what they regarded as the privileges he was experiencing, compared to them:

I became a bit of an outcast for a while. You just have to work your way back in...cos obviously all those guys that I hung about wi' in the community were all at Craigie, so they all spent every day, every hour together in school and out of school. And everything they got up to, everybody knew. So I'm only meeting them after school. So

I've missed half ae the day and half of this stuff that's going on. So it's playing catch-up all the time...quite a lot ae the guys were all high, hangin' about wi' guys who were fae down this way as well, so it was always kind of like a change-over at some points, it probably helped that I wasn't there the whole time. Cos it did always get brought down, the people that I met, the things that I did. Because Craigie never had a basketball team or did much athletics, anything like that.

Tom had completed a degree in Community Education and moved out of home and of the area – to Silverknowes, a wealthier neighbouring area. He had a job, albeit with a temporary contract. He described feelings of conflict between his new living arrangements yet remaining close to his family who stayed in Pilton and Muirhouse. However, although he felt materially better off, Tom felt that his new neighbourhood was lifeless compared to Muirhouse and Pilton:

Like, we've nothing to do with our neighbours, never see any kids on the street, there's a group of kids who live just on the corner who are always out and about, but it's just different...there is no feel. So there's no kids going next door to go and chat to the neighbours. It's like everyone's in the back garden playing. It's as if they're scared to let their kids out.

At school and in his young adult life, Tom has had to develop what Goffman (1963, p.99) calls a 'double biography' for each location. Similar to examples given in a study by Holland et al. (2007), Tom's individualised mobility was moving him away from integration with the community in Pilton. His continuing voluntary work with the Youth Forum could be explained, at least in part, as a way of reconciling his conflictual feelings, which possibly included some sense of guilt.

The bonding social capital (Gewirtz et al., 2005) that protects young people in Pilton can also establish barriers to risk-taking and exploration beyond familiar places. For example, Hazel, a local employment adviser,

recognised the structural barriers to employment for local young people and she described training courses at local technical colleges as 'meaningless' in terms of helping young people find employment, suggesting that rather than training for employment they were being used to keep young men off the streets and out of trouble. The SID/MUD discourse (Levitas, 2005) runs deep here, with, for example, an emphasis on paid employment as a marker of 'social inclusion' and moral failings of individuals as an important contributor to failure to achieve that. Some of the people who work with young people in Pilton unconsciously stigmatise local people as falling short of acceptable social norms (Goffman, 1963), for example in their attitudes to employment. Some staff emphasise their role as to help people to take some risks, in terms of exploring opportunities to work and socialise and to think about building adult lives in other contexts. Implicit within this, there is an underlying acceptance that 'success' within Pilton is not possible, or rather that if you remain in Pilton you are *de facto* 'unsuccessful'. Like other staff, Carol, who worked at Telford College repeatedly emphasised 'broadening horizons' as an important part of her work and blamed young people's families for limiting their bridging capital:

Broadening horizons cos I think, and I know how hard it is, I don't know how hard so that's a ridiculous thing to say, I can imagine how hard it is for them when none of your family have got a bank account, when no one's ever worked, to say 'I want to go and get a degree' and not even learning, 'I want to go and become a dancer in London', 'I want to work in a meat factory in Bo'ness', because unless we let these young people know there is another way, it's never gonnae change here and I find that just soul-destroying.

Of course, another perspective on some young people's lack of interest in venturing far from Pilton either physically or in their dreams might be that, as Gregor, a youth worker put it, 'Everything they need they perceive is here. They don't need to go elsewhere'. Thus, Donald's assertion that he

would try to get into the local Telford College, 'because it's local so I wouldnae have to go far' and Helen's statement,

Like, cos I've been here for so long, I just don't think I'd really want to move. Cos it's, I dunno, I feel comfortable around Pilton. I wouldnae want to stay somewhere where I knew naeone.

can be seen as statements of contentment. Conversely, the reason why staff see their role as being to change might be due to their own assumptions that young people cannot be fulfilled and/or successful while they remain living in the local area.

Goffman (1963, p. 58) describes as 'passing', managing 'undisclosed discrediting information about self', when stigmatised people find themselves in social situations with others. There is evidence of this in some young people's leisure lives, as they begin to socialise in bars and night clubs outside the neighbourhood. As in other studies (for example, Shildrick et al., 2009), how they are perceived and labelled has consequences for how they perform. For example, going to bars and nightclubs in central Edinburgh can provide conflictual situations where their experience of a stigmatised identity can mean that they develop stressful coping strategies. A small number of young people who were beginning to participate in the night time economy in the centre of the city described using clothes as contributing to making them attractive to the opposite sex, as well as providing the impression of affluence to the people they met there. Some of these young people – for example, Vincent and Willie, Oonagh and Patsy - also described strong feelings about Pilton and Piltoners being stigmatised. Oonagh felt that others were 'too quick to judge', based on where you have grown up. By dressing in a way that, to them seemed affluent, they seemed to think that they might avoid the negative labelling by others that might accrue to them by association with Pilton. Oonagh and Patsy also said that they tried to avoid telling people that they come from Pilton when they socialised in pubs and clubs in central Edinburgh, though they also emphasised that this did not imply that they were ashamed of their Pilton-based friends and families.



## **Stigmatised 'others' within Pilton**

Elias and Scotson (1994, p. 159) suggest that stigmatised groups can take on a group identity, based on what they call a 'minority of the worst' rather than a 'minority of the best'. 'Piltoners' often take on board such normative ideas about their community and they target their 'blame gossip' specifically at other groups and individuals whom they regard as more 'disgraceful' than themselves. Young people interviewed tended to blame others, usually younger than them, for anti-social behaviour. In line with other studies which discuss parenting (for example, McDermott and Graham, 2005), for the mothers' group, the problem was 'other' mothers, who were characterised as neglecting their children, living on benefits and promoting a workless lifestyle to their children. They also subscribed to the mainstream belief in generations of worklessness in Pilton, despite there being no empirical evidence from anywhere else to substantiate that these exist, even in the most disadvantaged communities (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2007). Beth, one of the mothers in the group at PYCP claimed that some women were explicit in voicing these attitudes and intentions to take advantage of the benefits system. No doubt she was influenced to some extent by a broader public discourse along these lines:

Put it this way. There's a lot of young kids in this area that their mum does have a lot of children and like we've sat and had conversations and they do, they do voice it out that they're, when they're older they're gonnae have loads of bairns because they'll be kinda, they'll get a hoose out of it and their mum's quite well off.

At odds with such claims, I found no convincing evidence of anything other than a strong work ethic being passed from mothers to their children. Patsy described how there was friction in the household if she did not seem to be trying hard enough to find work. She agreed with her mother's point of view, even though she also complained about it:

Ah wouldnae like tae work and tae then huv tae pay for somebody else's habits. I widnae dae that. No way. If you were sittin' there and

ye're like 'I want fags. I want fags' I wouldnae pay for them if I worked. Ah'd want tae spend ma money on myself. My mum's got a house tae run and that so I see her point.

However families were structured, young people emphasised that their parents/carers had imbued them with attitudes that emphasised the importance of work and a career. For example, Nora described her parents as motivating and supporting her and also offering practical advice in helping her to achieve whatever she wants to do:

My mum and dad support me in whatever I say. If I say to my mum and dad, 'I'm gonnae be an astronaut', they would support me and be, 'Let's, ye can dae it. Like, go there, this is what ye need to do. Go tae Uni, do this, do that'. And when my pal said she wanted tae be a cakemaker or something, she wanted a bakery, my mum just went, 'Awright'.

Apart from 'bad' mothers, other groups specifically signalled out for reprobation by local people included 'paedos' (suspected paedophiles), 'jakies'/'alcies' (drunks/alcoholics) and 'junkies' (drug users, usually heroin). The fact that paedophiles (or suspected paedophiles) were specifically mentioned several times by young people as something to be worried about reflected broader contemporary 'moral panics' (Chatterton and Hollands, 2003; Griffin, 1993; Springhall, 1998). There had been some incidents of child abuse locally but Ian, community policeman, suggested that the panic that parents had about paedophiles was having a negative impact on young children as they were growing up:

The school link officer down at Craigroyston, he did a wee survey, and nearly every kid in the year put 'paedophile', regardless ae or 'kiddy fiddler' and they had all these different names for them...and I was like, well. How do, where does this come from? I think it's their parents again. 'Oh, he's a paedo.' Stereotyping. Old guy. Raincoat. Glasses. Beard. That is total stereotyping and I think it comes down to education again.

The idea that a child abuser could be identified by the way they looked, by a 'stigma symbol' (Goffman, 1963) was widespread. For example, Irene described an older man who seemed 'weird' as a possible 'paedo', though she had no evidence for this:

Cos you do get some real weirdos. Just weird...like, there's weirdos, I dinnae ken how tae describe it like. Beasts, basically...like, they're just, like, weird. Like...there's this guy that just walks about. What is it he does? He does that buzz thing. It's like that - BZZZZ. He, like, he just does that aw the time. When he walks past you and that, like, he tries tae talk tae ye and that. So it's really weird.

In line with other studies (for example, MacDonald and Marsh, 2002), young people in Pilton differentiate between what they often regard as their own acceptable use of alcohol and cannabis and the use of 'poverty' drugs such as heroin. Alcoholics and heroin users were stigmatised 'others' within the community. The 'alcies' were described as being physically threatening. John said 'The alcies, when they're steamin' drunk and they try and fight wi' ye'. On the other hand, according to accounts by people such as Uri, the street heroin users were reviled as a hopeless 'underclass' rather than as a threat to social order or a physical danger:

Like, if you got into a fight wi' them, for example, they couldnae dae nothing to ye cos they're that, they're that junked up, they couldnae dae nothing.

As young people and staff in Pilton asserted that prejudice towards LGBT people had largely disappeared, they do not feature in this list of stigmatised groups. Notwithstanding this, and in line with MacDonald and Marsh's findings (2005), young people tended to have very conventional ideas about what constitutes 'normal' family life. One impact of this was that although many people protested that homophobia was not an issue, the behaviours of non-heterosexual people were strictly circumscribed by conservative social norms, set by the majority community. Ian, a community policeman, told me that homophobic crime was not a problem,

albeit with the substantial qualification, 'unless the person's openly out and saying it to the kids in the area. And I reckon if they done that, then, yes, they would be targeted'.

### **'Old' and 'new' Piltoners**

According to Goffman (1963), stigma can act to reduce social cohesion in communities as well as thriving in a context where social cohesion is weak. A narrative of decline resonates through the discourse of staff, parents and young people in Pilton. Several staff who had long histories in the area wistfully discussed the passing of an old community with common social mores; they opined that events like the Pilton Gala Day, which had been revived after several years in 2012, but was cancelled in 2013, had been important events to bind the community together. Counter-arguments also existed with some staff and young people suggesting that the demolition and rebuilding of large parts of the scheme had improved the area physically and changed its nature, by bringing in a 'wider cross section' (i.e. 'better') group of people. Although the literature is full of descriptions where strong networks can provide support such as help with caring, moral support in crises and job networking, Gough et al. (2006) argue that planners have historically sought to break up existing communities who live within what they see as a 'negative culture of poverty' (Gough et al., 2006, p. 108). Such attitudes were evident in the testimony of Ian, a community policeman, who argued that, by breaking up networks that exist across extended families, the community priority of preventing and reducing crime might be achieved:

And I stood up at a community council meeting and I says, 'I think they should be broken up. Youse are living in the Dark Ages if you think youse all can live in the same street. It doesnae work like that any more...well I says, 'Take them out the area.' I openly says, 'Take that person or take that family out the area. Stick them somewhere else. And see if they can survive without their aunties, uncles in another area. They're only a bus journey away but I can

guarantee they'll be a totally different family somewhere else.

Despite these aggressive acts and the continuation of stigmatising attitudes, people in Pilton continue to have strong community networks. However, as various UK and international studies (Bottrell, 2007; Elliott et al., 2006; Holligan and Deuchar, 2009), and as argued by Goffman ' (1963, p. 32), cohesion among the 'stigmatised' can mean that an individual 'can use his disadvantage as a basis for organizing life, but he must resign himself to a half-world to do so. Thus, engagement in anti-social, criminal behaviours as a group can indicate the cohesion of groups of young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Nonetheless, there was no evidence of organised criminal gangs among the young people interviewed in this study, although the existence of a flourishing drug market was incontrovertible from many accounts.

### **The Established and the Outsiders (Elias and Scotson, 1994)**

'The Established and the Outsiders' (Elias and Scotson, 1994) depicts an established community that operated to stigmatise and exclude incomers. However, 'Winston Parva' differed from contemporary Pilton most notably in relation to the vastly changed labour market situation:

The prospect of having 'to go on short-time every now and then' and of working in less congenial surroundings led to some uncertainty, especially among adolescent girls. They were faced with the choice between relatively high wages in the traditional industries with the possibility of 'short-time' added to lack of modern amenities, and the lower but regular wages of the more modern biscuit factory. This uncertainty was one of the factors which made a number of young girls change their work several times in the first few months.

(Elias and Scotson, 1994, p. 31)

In 1960s' Leicestershire there was full employment and the established community was more powerful than the newcomers in wielding local social

and economic power. In contrast to this, for young people nowadays in Pilton, where they did manage to find work this was often low paid and precarious, representing what MacDonald (2009, p. 174) calls 'a 'new' route to lasting poverty and long-term marginality'. Pilton has high levels of unemployment, (Scotland's census, 2016; Scottish Government, 2012, 2009; Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics, 2015), few local job opportunities, and what jobs exist are often low-paid and unstable in service industries based on the neighbourhood's peripheries or further afield. The impact of stigma on community cohesion influences many young people's attitudes to newcomers.

In poor districts, according to Lupton (2003), networks under pressure can move to use their threatened power against newcomers. Whereas in Winston Parva the 'old' families regarded themselves as socially superior to newcomers there is evidence in Pilton of different processes; at the same time as resenting incoming Eastern Europeans and blaming them for usurping opportunities for employment for the indigenous population, and some may use this as an excuse for their own sense of failure to find work and/or to undertake low status jobs. Rather than this being a situation where newcomers are stigmatised by existing families as inferior (Elias and Scotson, 1994), in Pilton the immigrants reinforce 'Piltoners' pre-existing sense of social 'disgrace' (Goffman, 1963).

In Winston Parva, the 'established'<sup>13</sup> residents had 'a common mode of living and a set of social norms' (Elias and Scotson, 1994, p. xxii) that was threatened by the arrival of new people from other towns who seemed 'rougher' than they were. The established community's tools of social organisation were far superior to those of the newcomers, who had mainly being resettled from inner-city areas in other parts of England, so that they could actively exclude the latter from their leisure spaces and activities, including from organisations such as council, church and clubs, which provided social status and a sense of cohesion. They were able to do this

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<sup>13</sup> It has to be noted that the very idea of an 'established' group is to some extent at odds with Elias' constant theme of dynamic configurations.

as the newcomers lacked the social cohesion that they would have needed to challenge this oppositional power. The 'established' consistently reported that they felt superior to the newcomers, and not one person broke their rule of not fraternising with the other group in the course of the study. Their exclusionary behaviour and insistence on social conformity could be seen at the same time as indicating the strength of their network and as a response to threat, wherein breach of established norms might cause the whole network to fail (Portes, 1998).

As discussed at length in Chapter Ten, young people's daily lives in contemporary Pilton include a constant awareness of the threat of violence and the need to be prepared to defend yourself. Within that context, some young people suggested that the newcomers may be more cohesive as a group and that this makes them organise more effectively as gangs than the 'established' 'Piltoners'. For example, some young people spoke respectfully of the ability of the Polish to organise themselves into fighting groups. Rob said, 'There is, like, there is a lot ae them as well, ken, and when they want tae go, they go' and Xander recounted, 'Oh Polish got it tight here, oh aye...oh they can pull a squad like. Huh hi, one phone call. Definitely'. Some young Piltoners exhibited racist attitudes, especially against Polish newcomers in the district. Ian, a community policeman, offered an explanation for this:

Yes, I think ones that have been brought up in the same area, been brought up with no other life, and that's all they know, they're scared ae outsiders coming into the community, regardless of age, race, sexuality. They're scared ae outsiders, if they don't recognise this person, 'I've never seen them before, they're no frae here'.

The 'social prejudice' (Elias and Scotson, 1994) between 'established' 'Piltoners' and new immigrants can be understood by considering the figurations formed by the groups concerned, i.e. the nature of their interdependence. In Pilton, the 'established' group may be acting to try to stigmatise because the latter pose a threat in a competitive employment market, rather than because they are seen as inferior to the indigenous

population. Although local employment advisers told me that there was a paucity of low-skilled work in the local area, i.e. around Pilton, they felt that across Edinburgh there were many opportunities in the service sectors. However, they emphasised the emotional and psychological barriers that inhibited many young people from exploring wider options.

### **‘Secondary gains’ (Goffman, 1963)**

Des, a youth worker, suggested that young people who told me that they would do any job were, in reality, more selective than this, reflecting what Goffman (1963, p. 81) calls a ‘retrospective construction of biography’:

I think it's quite a sorta, quite a kinda blinkered view. Quite a lot of the jobs people could do but it's whether they'd be willing to do. Quite a lot of people you'll speak to are quite condescending and negative about certain jobs...like, ‘I wouldn't work in McDonalds’.

As in other disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Gunter and Watt, 2009), young people in Pilton also often hold conservative ideas about the employment that was appropriate for their gender, so that young men gravitate towards ‘masculine’ jobs such as builders, engineers and manual work and young women consider ‘feminine’ positions in hairdressing, beauty and childcare work. Retail work is more ambiguous, with the nature of the business influencing opinions; for example, computer games could be ‘masculine’ but supermarket cash register work is considered ‘feminine’. Vincent described doing work experience then going to the local technical college, followed by a series of short term jobs, and the impact this was having on his mental health. However, although Vincent said he was desperate to find any work, he had told some staff that he would not consider supermarket work as he considered that to be female work and ‘below’ him. This is possibly an example of what Goffman talks about when he says that the stigmatised sometimes use their stigmatised position as an opportunity for ‘secondary gains’, i.e. as an ‘excuse for ill success that has come his way for other reasons’ (Goffman, 1963, p.21). Willie chose to



believe that the reason he could not get work was because immigrants, particularly Poles, were undercutting local workers on salary:

They'll come over and they'll beat our hours for the pay. They'll say 'I want work boy'. Just say it's £9 an hour, they'll say 'I'll do this for £6 an hour. As long as you give me the job. Please. I'm desperate.'

In young 'Piltoners' casual conversation and in interviews, such attitudes surfaced frequently, especially when talking about (lack of) employment opportunities. However, the sociological enquiry should consider the power relations between the groups, rather than assuming that racism exists as a prejudice related to something specific, such as coming from another country, language or skin colour and assuming that that is what influences the relationships between groups (Elias and Scotson, 1994). In Pilton, the promotion of violence by young people such as Willie can be comprehended as a response to the perceived socio-economic threat posed by new immigrants:

If they want us tae put in and pull aw these Cs oot and dae it, an' take over their shops, happy tae dae it...Ah could put ma whole family and the whole ae Pilton on this right now, the whole of Pilton would get together right now and rip every single person oot. Right now.

In arguing for violent action to reclaim what he imagines used to be a one-dimensional white Scottish Pilton, Willie lacks the historical knowledge about how 'Piltoners' battles in the 1980s and 1990s against racism. Hazel, an employment adviser recalled community action to counter some racist attacks:

One of the first things I became involved in was an anti-racist march...and out of that grew the Black Community Development Project. And there was that sense of people standing together. And, 'We won't have that kind of stuff in our community.'

As with other accounts, however, Hazel's story describes the passing of a community that was challenged, stigmatised and poor but at the same time open and inclusive. Willie's views demonstrated the sense of threat that some young people feel in contemporary 'risk' society (Beck, 1992) and their willingness to try to blame the immigrant 'other', rather than to recognise the structural issues that have contributed to the challenges that they face in the labour market.

## **Conclusions**

This Chapter has considered the concept of stigma and its impact on young people as they develop new, adult identities. Drawing on Goffman (1963), I have discussed how young people, their friends and families in Pilton are judged harshly by others by virtue of their age, socio-economic status, geographical location and lack of power. Stigma reduces some young people's confidence to venture beyond limited geographical and social boundaries in ways that might enable them to compete in a difficult labour market, where others have significant advantages. When individuals attempt to do this, they create different identities for different contexts, but they often feel a sense of guilt about betraying their roots.

While they recognise the unfairness of stigmatising attitudes, as Goffman (1963) makes clear, stigma can only exist where, to some extent, the stigmatised accept the judgement of others on them. Some Piltoners collude with the negative perceptions of others about their community. Responses by parents include sending their children to schools outside the district. Responses by young people include 'passing' (Goffman, 1963), adopting developing different identities for different so, for some, hiding where they come from. The stigmatised also stigmatise others, for example, by asserting that others within their communities – such as the 'irresponsible mother', the 'benefit-claiming drug addict' – are more 'disgraceful' than they are.

I have suggested that the prejudiced attitude that some young people expressed about immigrants, especially from Poland, may be related to the

fact that the newcomers may act as a mirror, shining a light on the lack of cohesiveness within the Pilton community. This is very different from Elias and Scotson's (1994) account of 1960s Leicestershire where prejudice towards newcomers was based on a perception of the latter's inferiority. By their ability to organise as gangs, the newcomers can also threaten the 'tough' identity of 'Piltoners'. It is also possible that the competition from the newcomers also provide opportunities for a minority of young people to blame them for their own inability to find and retain a job. As elsewhere (Wacquant, 2008), the response of some young people in Pilton is to the experience of stigma is to act in ways that confirm the 'disgraceful' characteristics allocated to them by outsiders; for example, by engaging in violence and criminal behaviours which damage themselves individually and their communities, and reinforce external players' attitudes. The next chapter will explore such behaviours. In doing so, it is important to keep in mind that, while stigma certainly affects young Piltoners' social identities as they become adult, it is a relational concept, an artefact based on power inequalities between groups.

**Introduction**

Alongside the supportive social networks of friends and families that young people have in Pilton, as discussed in Chapter Five, it is clear from interviews and observation that, just as Wacquant found in his exploration of 'ghettos' in the USA and France, young people in Pilton experience an 'extraordinary prevalence of physical danger and the acute sense of insecurity' (Wacquant, 2008, p.54). Pilton is placed in the top ten per cent of crime districts in Scotland (Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics, 2015), and young people's daily experiences include having a constant anxiety about the risk of violence to themselves and others.

The discussion in this chapter will make clear that the street, where many young people spend a lot of time, is the most unsafe space, where young people can be victims and perpetrators of violence. I will also explore how spaces which should be safe, for example, where young people are surrounded by known and trusted people, such as families, friends and youth workers, can become places of risk and danger. As an example, I will relate my own account of feeling unsafe during some observation sessions in PYCP, where it seemed that the danger from the street outside was coming in. I will then consider the apparent failure of the police, either to protect young people, or to make them feel safe, and examine the strategies that young people therefore adopt to protect themselves. These include, taking action to avoid being conspicuous. This can include making sure that you wear the same clothes as others. It can also mean that you behave in similar ways to the people who might threaten you; for example, one gay young man, John, may have been disruptive at school, so as not to draw attention to his 'difference'.

Having discussed the violent behaviour that happens and people's responses, I will go on to explore possible reasons for why violent behaviour has become, to some extent, a social norm in Pilton. As Pilton

has become a stigmatised community, as investigated in Chapter Nine, I will suggest that violent behaviour might be learned behaviour that, according to Goffman (1963) confirms individuals' sense of 'social disgrace', and that of their community. Violence in marginalised communities has been characterised by Wacquant (2008) as a response to feeling weak or powerless within hegemonic social structures. However, Wacquant (2008, p.2) also argues that urban marginality varies:

The *generic mechanisms* that produce it, like the *specific forms* it assumes, become fully intelligible once one takes caution to embed then in the historical matrix of class, state and space.

Following this theme, I will suggest that the violent behaviours that are commonplace in Pilton must be considered as being related to the specific history of the neighbourhood and of family and friendship networks within it; to young Piltoners' perceptions of themselves and their sense of being stigmatised; for young men, to feeling compelled to conform to hegemonic norms of masculinity; to feeling frustrated by lack of opportunities and just lashing out; to having fun, for example in group escapades of destruction and fighting with rival groups of young people; to feeling threatened by newcomers and/or difference, exemplified, for example by Polish immigrants; to the existence of a local drug market; to the use of drugs and/or alcohol. No one reason for the violence is posited and the figurations (Elias, 1983) that engage young people are recognised as dynamic and unique. While I will avoid over-simplistic conclusions, such as that violence is an inevitable consequence of poverty and social inequality, it will be clear from the matters discussed that these elements co-exist and impact on each other.

### **Violence as part of daily life**

Official records (Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics, 2015) indicating that Pilton is an area with high levels of crime are borne out by young people's accounts. Many young people in Pilton feel anxious about the risk of

physical violence every day, and they develop individual and collective strategies to remain safe. Young people's narratives were very different from the online recollections of David Blackburn, who grew up in Pilton in the 1950s:

It was like a giant playground and I never felt unsafe (edinphoto, 2016).

Some researchers (Henderson et al., 2007) have suggested that in close knit communities such as this, the connections between victims and perpetrators of crime has made violent crime part of the pattern of daily living, especially for young people. Thus, young people can be both perpetrators and victims of violent behaviours, with the interactions becoming embedded as part of their social identities, especially for young men. This was validated by Rob's account that there was something in the collective history of people in Pilton that he felt was not far beneath the surface, bursting out frequently into fights among young people:

It just has to be one person who has to say one thing and that'll be it. It'll all just kick off...it's just the way everyone's been brought up. It's the way this community is...I think it's like, everyone's just so short-tempered. It'd take anything to trigger anyone off. Like the slightest wee thing –it's just the way everyone's been brought up. It's like, everyone's history and that. Like the way their parents have been and the way they've been brought up. Stuff they've had to see. They've been put through.

Young men such as Edgar described constantly having to be on their guard:

Ye cannae always be sure that there's no somebody just oot there, wanting tae dae something. And it could end up bein' you that they dae it too.

Patsy suggested that young men were more at risk of violence than young women, usually from other young men and not only located in the neighbourhood, but also happening when they socialised in other areas:

I think it's more difficult for guys. Because I think when guys go up toon, like, they just pick fights wi' other guys for no reason and people get stabbed for no reason. That scares me when my brothers are walking the streets.

### **Spaces of risk and safety**

More often than not, the fear and experience of violence was talked about as a street-based phenomenon, with some streets being felt to be less safe than others. Some people described their fear of street drinkers, 'the 'alcies', when they're steamin' drunk and they try and fight wi' ye' (John). Leona, who was attending college on the other side of Edinburgh, described how she would not walk around Pilton, instead using her car to drive to and from college. However, despite this, she still became a victim of violence when her car was attacked by a group of people, younger than herself:

I was driving home from my gran's with my mum in the front seat and - this is my old car – and I was quite close to my house, so it was in Pilton and there was a massive group of, I'd say, 13 – 15 or 16 year olds. And my window was open and we were talking. So we stopped talking when we went past them. I don't know why. They did seem intimidating but they were children, so we shouldn't have been – my mum's 40, I'm almost 20, we shouldn't have been intimidated. And then, as we drove past them, we were a wee bit past them and they smashed my back window. I don't know what with, but it completely shattered...and I was quite annoyed, because I was, I was actually scared...Like if I hadn't been in my car, I wouldn't have been angry. In fact, if they had just attacked the car, I would have been annoyed, but I was in the car. My mum was in the

car. It was like, if only it had just been me... I only just got out...I was so angry that we - it was bad, it was wrong. It did a lot of damage.

For Leona, her car should have been a safe space. Likewise, for most young people, home should be a space of safety. When this is breached, the impact can be severe. Edgar is a young man who has been a perpetrator of violence and has been charged for a number of, mainly petty, crimes. He described his most serious incident, after which he was convicted for possession of a dangerous weapon, a knife, as a reasonable, instinctive response to a threatening intrusion into the home of his friend. He claimed that he was innocent of any intention to harm anyone with the knife, but the judiciary disagreed:

The worst thing I've ever been done for was when my pal's kitchen windae got smashed and we ran out his back door and, me being me, ah didnae realise ah had a knife in my hand because I was cuttin' a bit of cheese and I ran away doon the street and I got caught off the polis...ah didnae even realise ah had the knife in my hand. Because ah wis cuttin' cheese in his kitchen and a brick came through the windae and just, my reaction was to run right out the back door...ah didnae even realise that ah had the knife in ma hand. I wis just runnin' efter them.

Most young people shared Edgar's sense that the home should be a venue of safety. However, for some, it seemed that nowhere in Pilton was without risk. Steffi, 16, talked about constantly being verbally abused and having stones thrown at her by other young people as she went from her home in Muirhouse to and from PYCP in West Pilton, a journey of about ten minutes maximum. She was very conscious of the threat of sexual violence and she described how, on her way home from school, an apparently predatory stranger had tried to get her to enter his car:

I was walking home for about half four, it was kind of dark, that's when it gets darkish, just walking home the back way, past the



doctor's and things, walking home. This car drove past me and started to give me a so much, 'I mean I know your mum, I'll take ye home' and things. 'Naw' I went, 'I'm walking home'.

At home, Steffi also experienced verbal and physical abuse in her relationships within her family. With her mother and stepfather, she endured constant criticism when she was deemed to have made mistakes in the many daily chores that she undertook. These included taking her younger brother to and from school, but the example she gave was, 'if I go to the chip shop and ye've not done it properly or go to the shops and it's not the correct bread or something'. She was, however, having some respite from the disruptive and violent behaviour of her older brother, who had moved away from the family home:

He was smashing my mum's house up, my big brother, cos kind of, I think he's got a behaviour problem...I don't really get on with him and we don't get on at all. Cos when he used tae batter me, things like that, so it wasn't nice.

Steffi also talked about a situation where the threats from the street had intruded into her family home. One evening, she was sitting with her mother watching television and they were disturbed by 'a fight like metal poles, banging and like on each other like a swordfight or something, it was really horrible'. The two women huddled in their apartment so that they would not become involved in the events happening outside – 'so ah had tae shut ma mum's door room and keep the telly down low and things'.

Mark, an African immigrant, also described threats and abuse both on the street and at home. He considered these actions to be racially motivated. Incidents that had occurred included being called, 'You fucking black teenage vandal' when he accidentally knocked over a chair in a McDonald's café near to Pilton. At his home, on one occasion, his mother had had to hide in the living room from young people who had climbed

onto the apartment's balcony – 'they climbed onto the balcony and started like knocking – bam, bam, bam, bam...to victimise my mother really'.

### **PYCP: The 'outside' coming in**

The youth centre, PYCP, was usually a peaceful, though noisy, place. Steffi emphasised that PYCP was the place where she felt most safe. However, I myself experienced a number of occasions, which I will now describe, where the violence from outside seemed to enter into PYCP. I was disturbed by each, feeling that my position was made more risky by my sometimes ambivalent role as an observer, rather than a youth worker in the centre. I will now draw on my observation notes, which document what happened and my reflections on the events.

### **September 2012**

I arrived and was immediately aware that the atmosphere felt busy and tense, though noisier at the entrance and quieter at the back. There was lots going on, with activities including people painting stencils and fingernails, playing table tennis. A young man invited me to play pool with him. Along the main hall/meeting area, groups of young men seemed to sweep through quickly and then young women would do likewise. This evening was unlike any previous evening that I had observed. The atmosphere tightened. I heard swearing, 'Fucking cunt', from several people. The age range was very mixed tonight – from 12-ish to 21-ish, with equal numbers of young men and women. There was a lot of noise. A young man was trying to hit one of the overhead lights with a pool cue. I thought that this was more silly than threatening. However, the group of young men repeatedly swept through the building with great force. Someone knocked over a drink on the floor and refused to clean it up, when asked by one of the workers. That was the first time that I had seen young people not following workers' instructions.

I became curious that some young people had shut the football hall door and I heard thumping and thudding from within the hall. A few people continued to play pool or table tennis, ignoring the disruption. In the middle of the main room, a young man (John, one of my interviewees) was painting a stencil with two young women and he refused to be interrupted.

I moved into the kitchen area, out of the main thoroughfare. I heard a member of staff shouting, 'You'd better get that off him, it's a flare!' A young man had a flare and was threatening to set it off in the middle of the busy part of the main hall. Another young man came running into the kitchen, lifting a smaller boy off the ground. The excitement seemed to spread to a group of young men who, up till then, had been sitting nearby quietly started calling each other 'cunt', over and over. The young man with whom I had been playing pool looked upset. Two of the youth workers escorted the group who were causing most trouble out of the building. Although this group went quietly, there were then arguments at the doorway. A group, male and female, around sixteen years old, hung about outside the front door for about ten minutes. They then set off the flare. This caused great excitement, screaming and laughing and many of the young people who had remained inside the building came to the window to see what was happening.

One of the notable things about observing here is how many moods can be operating at the same time in close proximity to each other. While these lively events were going on in the main part of the building, in the football hall, all seemed calm. Six young men sat on a bench, talking to each other and texting, while two others whacked a ball back and forward to each other, seemingly unconcerned with the rest of the chaos. In the main hall also, it seemed that many people had retreated into their own activities. For example, John was flapping a large painted stencil.

Outside the building, a group of young women were arguing to be allowed to enter and they were joined by a group of young children, around eight to ten years of age. The latter group noticed me and asked me what I was

doing there. At this stage, some of the staff seemed to be apologising to me, telling me that I had certainly had plenty to see tonight. The used flare was handed in to a worker. Some young people said that they had found flares on the beach, which is about half a mile away. One of the workers told me he was worried as 'these boys have no sense of danger'. The young men were local, and well known to staff but the young women had come to join them from another district to hang out with the 'bad boys'. A worker told me that he had said that the vehicles on the building site across the road should not have been left there at night as they would get vandalised. In a way he implied the inevitability of the destruction if temptation was left in the way. We saw lights going off on the building site and it was assumed that some vandalism was going on. As I was leaving, a policeman arrived. They had been called by staff. A staff member exclaimed 'This has been some hour!'

Reflecting on the events of the evening afterwards and whether or not I had felt frightened, I was not sure. The violence and disruptive behaviour represented more a collective surge of madness than a vindictiveness or anger targeted at me or anyone else.

## **October 2012**

The two staff who met me said that there had been a number of 'issues' this week. The centre had a rule that if young people had been excluded for bad behaviour, their parents had to sign a form to enable them to return. Some young men who had been excluded had not obtained these permissions and the staff were wondering whether to make an exception. They decided to do so, with the young men being directed for the first hour into a facilitated session with a worker that included reviewing and agreeing appropriate behaviours. There were maybe around forty or fifty young people, with the majority seeming older than sixteen. I noticed that young people had a range of dress senses this evening, different from the usual consistent uniforms of sportswear and sweatshirts. Some of the young women were wearing a lot of make-up, false eyelashes and big hair,

while two young women playing snooker were dressed in thin, dirty track suits. They were very thin.

There was lots to observe. Activities going on included table tennis, snooker, painting nails. Some young people were doing X Box dancing with the television in the main hall and there were many different noises coming from different directions and loud sound systems. Throughout the session, I also noticed that young people go to the kitchen to help themselves to the food that has been prepared. At one point, two young women queried if I was in a documentary but someone else told them, 'no'.

As before, I noticed what seemed like waves of energy sweeping through the place. All of the young people seemed to pick it up and their responses were either to become very excited or to retreat into their own headspace and activities. Some young men were behaving in a very aggressive fashion with the young women, including hitting them with snooker cues. One boy almost smashed a light with a ball that he threw as he came in. At one point, he and a younger man went into the office (which they knew was off-limits for them). I followed and asked them to leave, which they did. They seemed to have some respect for 'authority', apparently embodied in me. However, I was uneasy with my shift from being an observer to being an enforcer of rules.

In the meantime, the football continued peaceably enough, save for the fact that at one point the ball flew out and hit a young woman who was playing snooker really hard on the head. She pretended that it had not hurt and laughed it off.

On the way home, at the bus stop, a group of young men were shouting at somebody, not me: 'Faggot! Poofter!' They had also opened the back of the bus where the engine is so that the bus was delayed in departing from its stance. I saw some of the young people from PY at the bus stop across the road. I felt very negative about Pilton and the youth centre this evening. I had contradictory feelings about whether I was vulnerable and that my

sense of invisibility might protect me. I had a sense of threat and danger, both in the observation sessions and in the streets. I thought that this had been related to the fact that by not noticing me, I could easily get caught in others' cross fire. In this sense, my experiences were not very different from the daily experiences of most of the young people I interviewed, not necessarily directly targeted, but nonetheless affected by the violent behaviours of others. I was beginning to have some concerns about my vulnerability in my role as researcher and also that I was not known as a local person in Pilton.

### **January 2013**

Before the session started, some young people were outside throwing rocks onto the metal roof of the youth centre. There were only two staff on duty this evening and one of them suggested that it was going to be quiet as it was very cold outside. How wrong she was. On my way in, three young men shouted at me and 'high-fived' me, but it felt less like a friendly action than an attempt to show off with each other and/or even to intimidate me.

At first it was quiet, with ten or twelve young people but it became much busier, probably with about forty or fifty people at one point. Some boys went into the sports hall to kick a ball about. Elaine took some young women into the kitchen area to make wicker heart decorations. A worker was making pizzas in the kitchen with some young men. There was a tense atmosphere. Some food was thrown. It seemed to me that several of the young men might be high on drugs. Their eyes were dilated and they were moving and acting in a manner that came across to me as quite aggressive.

In the middle of all of this, a team of street outreach workers arrived with two visitors from a funding charity. They asked Elaine if they could have a tour round the building. She agreed and took them off into the football hall. Once in the sports hall, apparently one young man kicked a ball right into

the face of one of the external visitors. (Subsequently, another worker said that the ball had been aimed at Elaine. This seemed to shock her.) In the meantime, young people in the main hall were turning the music up very loud. Elaine had left a glue gun which she had been using for handicrafts. I had to take this away from a young man, who was vandalising some of the furniture with it. My role was unclear and I felt uncomfortable and that several young people were looking at me in a suspicious manner. Some deliberately walked past me, too close and definitely intending to intimidate.

I noticed that the harassment that the young women have to endure is terrible. Young men kept going up and pushing them, while grabbing and rubbing their own crotches. I noticed how the young women had stopped decorating the wicker hearts that they had been working on as young men kept on coming out and harassing them, poking them and laughing at them. The young women were laughing and trying to give the impression that they were okay with the young men's behaviour. (Afterwards, Fay, a youth worker, told me that such behaviours are accepted by young women because, 'They just think that's how it is and they think they can be treated like that'.) One young woman had an injured leg that she told me had happened from falling off a motorbike. The young men kept kicking her crutch away and other young women joined in, taking it off her and playing with it. While all of this was happening, a large group of young women entered the building and went down to the toilet at the far end. They were doing something in the toilet and trying to hide what it was. At the same time, a young man locked himself in the staff toilet, which they all know they are not supposed to use, and refused to come out when a youth worker was asking. Different young people were shouting at each other, disobeying requests from staff, hitting each other, throwing pizzas and apple cores. At one point, Elaine wrestled to the floor three times a young man who was chucking food about. This only made him livelier. Nonetheless, as in previous rowdy sessions, a few people quietly continued their pursuits, with two pairs playing pool and table tennis.

Eventually, Elaine said that she was sorry that she had to close but the situation was escalating and she had no choice. She was surrounded by a group of young women who wished to protest about this and it took a lot of arguing to get people to leave. One young man protested silently, standing with his back to everyone else, silent, refusing to move, but eventually deciding to leave. I felt worried as a large group – guys and girls – were hanging around the side of the building near to where I had to walk to get to the bus. On the way home, I noted the following in my diary:

It wasn't safe tonight. I also don't know what positive experience any young person would have got from tonight: violence, swearing, harassment of girls by boys, pushing them.

There had been no chance for me to have any interviews tonight. I found this evening quite depressing. At odds with the structured work that usually seemed to be going on, it seemed that, rather than being a haven, tonight the chaos and stress from the streets had transferred inside. I had been aware tonight of how threadbare, thin and light some of the young people's clothes are and how physically thin they are. Several of the girls were wearing what looked like light flannelette pyjama bottoms, not even track suit bottoms. Thin, cheap vests and pyjama trousers in freezing weather. They seemed at the same time poor and sexualised, with their teased-out, messy hair. I wondered who lets them go out in this freezing cold weather like this, who cares for them. They must have been frozen. I noticed that, even though the session felt chaotic, some of the boys still made sure that they got some pizza to eat. I wondered when, apart from then, they would be fed. I felt a sense of anger on their behalf.

The young people's actions seemed to me to exemplify the challenges of the place: the poverty, the toughness, violence, having to act up to fit in, ruining your own services and facilities. I had thought that the gang gathering outside might vandalise the centre. They seemed full of tension, frustration, hurt and anger. But this is undirected, unchanneled anger that turns on themselves. So what did I see? Poverty. This is the anger of



poverty – not focussed, not productive, just angry. I noted to myself that I did not feel that I was over-dramatising this; rather, I was just describing my real emotions. I found the situation this evening very upsetting and asked myself how these young people's lives will get better. Some of them talk as though their lives are over, their options closed by the time they are twenty or thirty. Although they are living, the quality of their lives is terrible. I wondered whether things would improve when they got older but I was not sure that that would be the case. I noted in my diary, 'This was awful tonight, felt quite hopeless - also that more's coming'.

When I next returned to PYCP, the service was closed but they had opened especially to get some interviewees for me. The day after the events that I had been part of, a group of young people had come and pulled down the metal awning on the front of the building. A decision had been made to close all week as a sign that not just the ringleaders who had been excluded had misbehaved. One of the staff reflected, 'It can't become a riot scene'. That was precisely what it had been.

### **The police response**

From her study in South Africa, Parkes (2007) suggests that young people relied on adults to protect them and that they regarded adults as exerting important control and regulation in risky contexts. This social context is very different from Pilton. For some, youth workers are seen, to some extent, as protectors and regulators. Relationships with mothers were often very close, but it was less certain that parents could protect young people from others' violence. Extended family and friendship networks, consisting of young people themselves, might be more effective. As for the police, they are rarely regarded by any young people as contributing to their safety and well-being, or of even being interested in it. 'Police Scotland' was established as a unitary force, covering all of Scotland in April 2013, just after most of my fieldwork in Pilton was completed. According to its website, (Police Scotland, 2016), its purpose is 'To improve the safety and well-being of people, places and communities in Scotland', its focus is

'Keeping People Safe' and its values are 'Integrity, Fairness and Respect'. However, young people in Pilton do not feel safe and many feel that local police demean, harass and disrespect them on a daily basis, similar to Parkes and Conolly's (2011b) findings from research in London. This is also not unlike Wacquant's accounts of the views towards local police of youths in French working-class banlieues whom he suggests are regarded as 'an undesirable presence sent for the express purpose of intimidating and harassing them' (Wacquant, 2008, p. 32). In historical accounts, such as those of Bob Sinclair, formerly of Pilton but now in Queensland, Australia, (edinphoto, 2016), the local policeman was regarded as a highly respected authority figure:

Our local Bobby was one who wore a helmet and was feared and respected by the youth of the area. To us he appeared to be a giant of a man, though he may only have been six feet in height. From memory he was a teuchter, but he had a good firm way of telling you what was what. The worst words you could hear him say were 'I'll have to tell your father about this'. 'Ah didnae mean to do it mister' or 'Ah'll no' do it again' could buy you a remission, but you would not get away with it a second time, for he had a good memory. He did, however, give you a sense of security and he was respected by both the older and younger members of the community.

In contrast, several young people suggested to me that, like other authority groups, the police are simply not interested in Pilton or in helping to resolve its problems. Fiona said, 'Tae be honest, I dinnae think they actually care about here'. Edgar, who himself had narrowly escaped imprisonment, explained the police's perceived nonchalance on what he thought was the failure of the judicial system to hand out strong enough sentences to punish and deter troublemakers from re-offending:

Ah think they're just gettin' sick ae catchin' them and chargin' them and they're no' endin' up gettin' secure because, tae be honest wi'

ye, half o' them really dae need tae get secure tae show them that they're no' aw invincible and there's consequences for what they're doing.

For most young people, the police are perceived to have wrong priorities. Helen suggested that:

Like, say, a proper emergency would happen, they'd take forever to come but say the most pointless thing would happen, like a windae got smashed, they'd be there in a matter of about two seconds. But say somebody got stabbed or something, they'd take forever to get here.

MacDonald and Shildrick (2010, p.7) note that, in Teesside, young people's street-based leisure activities, 'brought down on them routine stopping and questioning by the police, regardless of their involvement in any offending'. This is similar to Pilton where many young people in Pilton experience what they feel to be continual harassment by police when they are simply 'muckin' about' with their friends in the street. The problems with the Stop and Search procedures in Scotland have been well documented (BBC News Scotland, 2013). Between April and December 2012, there were 23,577 searches in Edinburgh (Scottish Police Authority, 2014). The Stop and Search figures in Scotland are far higher than in the rest of the UK. A BBC report in 2013 (BBC News Scotland, 2013) raised concern at the number of Stop and Search incidents carried out by the police in Scotland. This is extensively carried out on a 'non-statutory' basis, requiring only verbal 'consent' and young people are the most likely group to be searched. The Scottish Police Authority has recognised that the tactic has the potential to undermine relations between the police and community, including young people (Scottish Police Authority 2014). As well as young people describing this as everyday experience, Donald and some others described more serious abuse of young people by the police as commonplace:

If you're just standing there with your pals, I've seen the polis just grab you and take you away. They take you. They battered one ae ma pals before. They battered my sister's brother. They're just hated. It's just the way they use their power tae their advantage too much like.

As in Stephen and Squires' study about young people's social activities (2004), some young people in Pilton believe that their apparently anti-social behaviours are minor, when compared to the types and extent of crime in their neighbourhoods, which are not being tackled anywhere near so forcefully. Several young people described what they experienced as harassment by the police who conducted stop and search procedures when they felt that they were not doing anything wrong, just hanging about with their friends. Sometimes young people rejected and resented what they saw as unjust prohibitions. For example, Rob considered it to be acceptable to smoke cannabis in the open and complained when the police stopped him for this:

Ken, there could be somebody round the corner, like, battering somebody, you're standing on the street corner wi' yer pals, toking a joint or something, then you get arrested for it. Ken, you're just standing there.

Regardless of the police's intentions, most young people expressed doubts about their competence to protect them in threatening situations. Steffi suggested that 'they're mair terrorised, the police', yet she was one of the few people who said anything positive about them, including expressing her appreciation for their previous actions in coming to arrest her disruptive brother 'every weekend'. She suggested that the police were trying to engage with the community, though she acknowledged that other people might not recognise that:

The police can be helpful in things like, we have events in school, police talks tae us about all these healthy, keep safe and issues

and stuff so they're there for ye tae help ye as well and they're there tae take the bad people away. But obviously, there're both sides.

### **Young people's responses to feeling threatened**

Young people in Pilton tend not to have any sense of power to change the systems that so often fail to keep them safe. As they do not believe that the police can protect them, they respond individually and collectively in ways that, to varying degrees, enable them to withstand adversity and to 'bounce back' (Luthar et al., 2000b) from traumatic experiences. Some young people described avoiding streets which they sensed to be more dangerous than other places. Andy said, 'I don't go right through the middle of Pilton, I stick to the edge of it, stick to what I know is safe'. Leona drove everywhere as she did not feel safe walking in Pilton. Nonetheless, as discussed earlier, even this strategy was not sufficient to keep her safe at all times.

The strategy most commonly employed to keep safe was that of taking action so as to 'not stand out'. For example, one young man, Donald, told me that,

It's probably best tae no be as individual as possible. Like, I know you're meant tae be individual but it's best tae just blend in.

Such an approach might well, in this context, 'minimize...the damaging effects of adversity' (Grotberg, 1995) but such 'resilience' is not an outcome that the Scottish Government would recognise as meeting its target of supporting young people to be 'successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors' (Scottish Government, 2016).

Not 'standing out' can involve a range of behaviours, including paying attention to one's dress by wearing the standard informal sportswear adopted by most young people. For example, Steffi explained that she tried not 'to look smart and things cos, when you look smart and things, there's a lot ae bad people about...rapin' ae people and stuff like that'.

Actions to hide oneself are consciously taken, with an assessment of the options open to them. Of course, for some people, such as Mark and his black family, it would be very difficult not to stand out.

The 'Gang of Four' are described at length in Chapter Five and they provide a paradox by, in one sense, making themselves highly visible, carrying out painting and handwork, doing make-up, even while all around them there was riotous behaviour. By not reacting and ignoring what was going on around them, in a sense they also made themselves inconspicuous, ensuring they were undisturbed by potentially violent others. I noticed them immediately when I was carrying out observation sessions. I also sensed that John was not hiding his (gay) sexuality, which seemed to me to be a brave thing to do in this context, possibly making him vulnerable to abuse and attack. While other studies (for example, Frosh et al., 2002; Mac An Ghail, 1994) suggest that homophobia continues to flourish in contexts such as this, staff and young people argued that being gay was not a problem in Pilton. However, although I did hear homophobic terms of abuse being used by young people, I never saw or heard any abuse being directed at John.

According to Frosh et al. (2002), 'popular' masculinity involves 'features such as 'hardness', casual treatment of schoolwork and being adept at 'cussing'. However, at odds with his gentle behaviour that I witnessed at PYCP, it seems that at school, John had effectively adopted what McDowell (2003, p.23) calls, 'a hegemonic version of a working class masculinity that emphasises fooling around, having a laugh as preferable to academic achievement'. He told me that he had been excluded from school several times, including for threatening a teacher. By doing this, perhaps John had adopted a strategy that emphasised his commonality with others around him, despite being gay, and that had contributed to his current safe position.

## Reporting violence

It is a measure of the marginalisation that many young people feel that, when they experience violence, it is often not reported to parents, never mind to the authorities. The impotence that young people feel can also be shared by parents. For example, neither Steffi nor her mother reported the 'swordfight' incident to the police but decided not to do so; among other reasons she suggested that this would lead them to get into more trouble if they were identified as a 'snake in the grass'. Fear was the prime motivator informing this decision.

Young people described their sense that parents were not able to protect them or that their responses to violent incidents would make matters worse, fail to solve the problem and/or lead them to curtail the freedoms of the victims, ostensibly to protect them. Experiences of violence and young people's responses can imbue their transition experiences and the move to independence with deceit and cover-up; thus, the gaining of adult identity becomes, to some extent, a subversive process. Steffi chose not to report the incident with the man in the car to her mother as she did not trust that she would receive a helpful response. She did tell her aunt, who passed it on to her mother, who, as Steffi had expected, became upset and angry. Rather than offering support and advice, Steffi felt that she had had to deal with someone else's emotions as well as her own. The lesson was learned – to stay quiet in future – 'that's why I dinnae tell my mum anything about it, it disnae help'. When Mark was threatened at knifepoint, he also did not tell his mother about it, both for fear of raising her anxiety levels and also judging that her likely response would be inappropriate:

I wouldn't tell my mum because mum to freak out and stuff. And for years I'm not allowed to go out, just to go out at night, because she was scared.

Such actions to cover up what is happening can mean that officials, such as the police, are out of touch with young people's realities. For example,

Ian, the policeman whom I interviewed, told me that racial crime was not really an issue as there were hardly any reports of it. This conflicts markedly with Mark's accounts of racially-motivated provocations and attacks on himself and his family which were not reported and therefore do not figure in any list of crime statistics.

## **Explanations for violence**

I will now explore possible reasons for the violence that young people fear, and in which they are involved, as victims and sometimes as perpetrators. It may be that, as one young woman, Leona, told me, being angry is a characteristic of being young, symptomatic of the frustration and anxiety that comes with growing up. Various studies (for example, Henderson, 2007; Kelly, 2003) discuss the problematising of young people. Leona suggests that young people's anger may be a learned response to fulfil others' expectations of them:

I think most young people are angry generally...but not because that's their attitude or behaviour but because they're seen like that. So why not be like that?

Pilton has a reputation as a rough district; as Donald said, 'If ye're fae Pilton, it's quite stereotypical, ye're meant tae be quite hard'. This is similar to Parkes and Conolly's findings from a study with young men, where they argue that young men adopt 'tough' behaviours to conform to others' expectations of them (Parkes and Conolly, 2013). Rob suggested that being angry is a social norm, culturally embedded and related to tough childhood experiences:

It's just the way everyone's been brought up. It's like, everyone's history and that. Like the way their parents have been and the way they've been brought up. Stuff they've had to see. They've been put through.



Elias and Scotson (1994) discuss how people gain power in a group by relinquishing some individual freedoms and signing up to group norms. For some young people in Pilton, there is a strong pressure to join in with violent and anti-social behaviours. Some young people described losing control of their own behaviours, with harmful consequences for themselves and others. At the same time, young people construct a range of narratives to explain and/or justify their behaviours. For example, Donald suggested that pressure from peers led to his actions:

You've goat tae really. If ye dinnae and you try, if you're just a normal individual, they'll really say to you, 'What, you know are ye no daein' this? Why are ye no daein' that for?' They'll encourage ye tae be racist, tae be violent and tae vandalise.

My suspicion is that some of what Donald said was true but that he also engaged in these kinds of behaviours because of the exuberance and excitement of the moment, more a lack of thinking beyond the immediate, than an experience of peer pressure. Donald's fighting was, at the same time, an expression of youthful masculinity, group belonging and self-defence. This idea of 'performing anger', as this is what people think others expect of them, also ran through other people's interviews.

Donald also described what seemed to be group 'mores', whereby you had to defend your friends if others attacked them and 'good form' was to agree with combatants and respect the terms of the engagement in battle, expressed by Donald thus:

Ye just need tae hope that people stand by their word, like. If ah say tae somebody, ah've got somebody say tae me, 'Ah'm gonnae batter ye. Ah want ye tae meet me now for a one on one, ah would turn up by myself, just hopin' that they would turn up by theirselves but if they didnae then my ain fault for turning up by myself.

There was also a suggestion in several interviews that indulging in

disruptive and violent behaviours was a cultural rite-of-passage for younger young people than these, possibly between the ages of around twelve and sixteen. A youth worker described some young teenage men as being out of control, with 'no sense of danger'. Patsy, 18, made clear that the violence in the neighbourhood was due to 'the younger ones, that are younger than us':

And when these clubs arenae open, the bairns are just running wild and they just smashin' windows and smashin' cars and battering, like, other bairns and it's just crazy cos there's nothing for them tae dae so they just go wild and do what they want.

It seemed to be generally assumed that, in most instances, these behaviours would cease when young people left school, either because new responsibilities would emerge, including looking for and maintaining work and, for some, becoming parents. Alternatively, as was the case with Edgar, there was a realisation that future life chances might be ruined by gaining a criminal record.

### **Violence as a 'reasoned response'? (Wacquant, 2008, p.24)**

For Wacquant (2008, p.24), in contexts of disadvantage, violence is a reasoned response to various kinds of violence 'from above', an intelligible by-product of the policy of abandonment of the urban core. It would therefore be reasonable to suggest that young people in Pilton might turn to violence when they feel despondent about their circumstances and opportunities and have a low sense of self-worth. Bottrell (2007) suggests that the experience of marginalisation can lead young people to rebel, establishing social identities through behaviours that contravene mainstream norms. This can include becoming involved in violence. Bottrell terms this, 'resistance-as-resilience' (Bottrell, 2007, p. 612) and although, to some extent, it can be viewed positively, he also correctly notes that such behaviours can serve to marginalise people further than they already are, for example, by leading people to gain criminal records.

## **Alcohol, drugs and violence**

Chapter Eight describes the ready availability of alcohol and drugs in Pilton. Most of the young people in this study consumed alcohol and its impact on their own behaviour and that of others was recounted by several people. For example, Edgar suggested that he lost control of his own behaviour when he drinks:

If like, I when I go to a party and, like, I only have 10 beers or something. Because if I drink any more than that, I just end up becoming violent and I cannae really, when I'm drinking, ah cannae really control my temper once I get too drunk so ah dinnae really like it.

Xander also described how drunken people would provoke fights:

Ye get people that just go out, get full ae drink and just, somebody'll look at them, somebody'll just look at ye and that'll be it. 'What are ye looking at?'

A few interviewees talked about links between drug dealing and violent crime. Patsy described how petty acts of criminal damage and violence between groups of young people had escalated to drug dealing and murders:

Truthfully, most ae it's ma family. That are idiots. Cos it's basically, it's like my whole family lives here but it was mostly years ago when it was all crime and they were just, it was all just about crime wi' them...just violence. Fighting over motor bikes and stupid stuff like that but wee things like that turned intae bigger things when they got older which turned intae, like, drug wars and, it's just stupid...Now I've got, now I've got two cousins that are in jail for a couple of murders that happened here over stupid things and it's, stuff like that that you're looking at and you think 'Oh my God'.

However, rather than violence being associated with issues to do with organised crime, such as drug dealing, more often, young people's anxiety was related to fears of violence from other young people, with unspecified reasons for this. The most commonly used drug was cannabis, and this was generally deemed to have a calming effect. However, the existence of a flourishing local drug market meant that young people could sometimes be threatened by the behaviours of dealers. For example, Mark described a terrifying incident which had happened not long before the interview where he had been mistaken as a drug dealer and threatened with a knife:

And this guy just comes out of nowhere, he just comes out of nowhere, you know, with a knife...says 'Give me all the weed you have'. 'Like what?' I said, 'Give me all the weed you have...you bought so much weed from –'from who, I dunno, I did not recognise the name. Cos, you know, it's really, everything is happening, it's hectic you know, like, you're holding a knife at me, you know. It's really, really fast and I'm trying to get, I'm, like, holding his hand, you know, holding the knife and shit. He goes, like, 'you bought, I don't know how many grammes of weed you bought'. I'm, like, 'Right. I never got no weed'. And then the guy freaks me, you know, like, check, checking, checking, checking. And then he learns I don't have the weed. Here. And then I had a backpack so now he was really wanting to get in my backpack...so then this guy, he was pulling my big jumper so, considering I'm skinny, I didn't know if I could, like, if I could fight him back or something. And he's holding a knife, yeah? And then he learns I don't have the weed and then he goes...'Do not follow me', you know. 'Do not follow me'. Cos I was like, what am I, like right down the stairs he runs. He was pulling on a mask as well. So, you know, it was like a movie or something...Aw man, you've no idea. I was scared you know. I got home. I couldn't really think of nothing you know, like, what really happened? Why did it happen in the first place, you know? And I don't know what's happening at all, you know?

## **Violence related to being different – racism**

Elias and Scotson (1994) argue that behaviour deemed to be racist (and by extension I would presume also other behaviours, such as those that might be considered to be homophobic, though most people denied that this was a problem in Pilton) are related to power imbalances between groups. Difference is threatening and one group therefore has to act to make the other group submit. Earlier in this chapter, I discussed how 'not standing out' is a commonly employed strategy by young people, so as to avoid becoming victims of violence. Unfortunately, some young people find it more difficult than others to achieve the invisibility that will keep them safe. Helen asserted that, 'If you try and be different, you'll either get judged or, like, bullied and stuff like that'. Thus, Amy described an attack on her teenage son where she felt he was attacked because he 'stood out' by carrying a violin case, possibly symbolising that he had aspirations in a context where this was not the norm:

Because he had a violin case he was smacked across the back ae the head. He's 17, he's doing his Highers, he's a quiet boy.

Resentment with what they saw as their own lack of opportunities in the labour market led some young people to voice racist sentiments, including, in the case of Willie, arguing that the British National Party should come to Pilton to support mob action against immigrants:

I think, personally, what is it the BBN, BNP, they should basically get on top of this place, just go over it...well I want us tae get ourselves, the people from our countries, back on our feet first before they start lettin' everybody flood in...so we're all economically fine.

Such statements are undoubtedly offensive and other young people and some mothers also expressed racist comments. A youth worker, Antony suggested that,

If you scratch the surface, I'm sure you'd find it...you'd see people affiliated to, you know, racist gangs as well, just like you would in any other part of the country. I don't think it's particular to Pilton.

However, there was no evidence that racist political ideas were being promoted in any organised way.

Mark described violence directed against him for his one obvious difference, i.e. being black. He admitted that he would respond and fight back, especially if he had been drinking alcohol. However, racial violence was not limited to being against non-white people. Xander discussed a scenario at school where he had been enjoined by his teacher to befriend a new student, a young English man who had joined the class. He had been pleased to take up this task and went to approach the young man in the street after school. However, just before doing so, another group of young men approached and attacked the young English man:

I remember there was an English boy called Mackie. And he came into Pilton. And he was a year below me at school. And ah wis like, ken when the teacher comes round, and she's like one people, two people frae every class, show him about an' that. An' me and another boy in ma class wi' one ae them fae the older class. And I remember when I seen him at school, I seen him outside the school, and I was going to go over and talk tae him. And then four guys came out a back lane and battered him. Right in front ae me.

Xander described feelings of powerlessness, frustration and fear and a lasting sense of guilt that he had not felt able to do anything to intervene. He understood that the English family had moved back to England very soon afterwards and he blamed the violence for this.

## Conclusions

This chapter has discussed the ubiquitousness of violence in Pilton and the impact of this on young people's social functioning. I have portrayed the everyday risk and experience of violence that young people experience. From young people's perspectives, the police fail to prioritise keeping them safe, instead implementing strategies such as 'Stop and Search' that alienate them, arguably making them more vulnerable and more at-risk. The streets are where most violence takes place but, for some people, even their homes are not safe. The youth centre, PYCP, is generally a place of safety. In reflecting on my own experiences of feeling at-risk during some observation sessions, perhaps the most shocking element of these experiences was that PYCP had, until then, felt like a safe haven.

In considering why young people become perpetrators of violence against each other, I am convinced by the notion that there is peer pressure, not in the sense necessarily of people encouraging you to do things that you did not want to do, but more in the sense that engaging in violent acts yourself can also be one of the tactics employed to ensure that you do not yourself become a victim. There are other ways to protect yourself. These include making yourself as invisible as possible, fairly innocuously perhaps through not standing out by how you dress. As discussed in relation to John's behaviour at school, this can also involve behaviours which can do harm to yourself. It is also the case that much of the violence that young people experience is not reported to anyone.

In exploring reasons why violent behaviour may have become a social norm in Pilton. I have supported the position of Goffman (1963) that violent behaviour is learned behaviour that confirms individuals' sense of social disgrace, and also of Wacquant (2008) that violence in marginalised communities can be a response to feeling weak or powerless within society – comprehensible, though often self-harming. The violent behaviours of some people in Pilton may be comprehended as a complex,

dynamic response to feelings of marginalisation. Perversely, group fighting can also build a sense of belonging in a local context and provide a sense of social bonding with other like-minded local friends, albeit in a stigmatised context. The motivations can range from having fun and letting loose in an orgiastic fashion.

There were also, as was described by Mark, some incidents related to the existence of a local drug market and here, as elsewhere, the use of alcohol was often associated with violence. However, there is also evidence of more sinister motivations - for example, intimidation and attacks on new immigrant groups or male-female threatening behaviours. Nonetheless, although the threat and experience of personal violence may be higher here than elsewhere, I would reject the suggestion that young people in Pilton are inherently more likely to be violent than other young people. However, as elsewhere, the social behaviours of individuals in Pilton in relation to violence are dynamically interconnected with the behaviours of others, the social networks in which they engage and the socio-economic circumstances that they inhabit.



## Chapter Eleven: Resilience

### Introduction

Previous chapters have discussed the challenges that young people in Pilton face in many areas of their lives. This chapter discusses the Scottish youth policy response, encapsulated in GIRFEC, 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (Scottish Government, 2015b), with its emphasis on developing and supporting 'resilience' in young people. Luthar et al (2000b, p. 543) define resilience as:

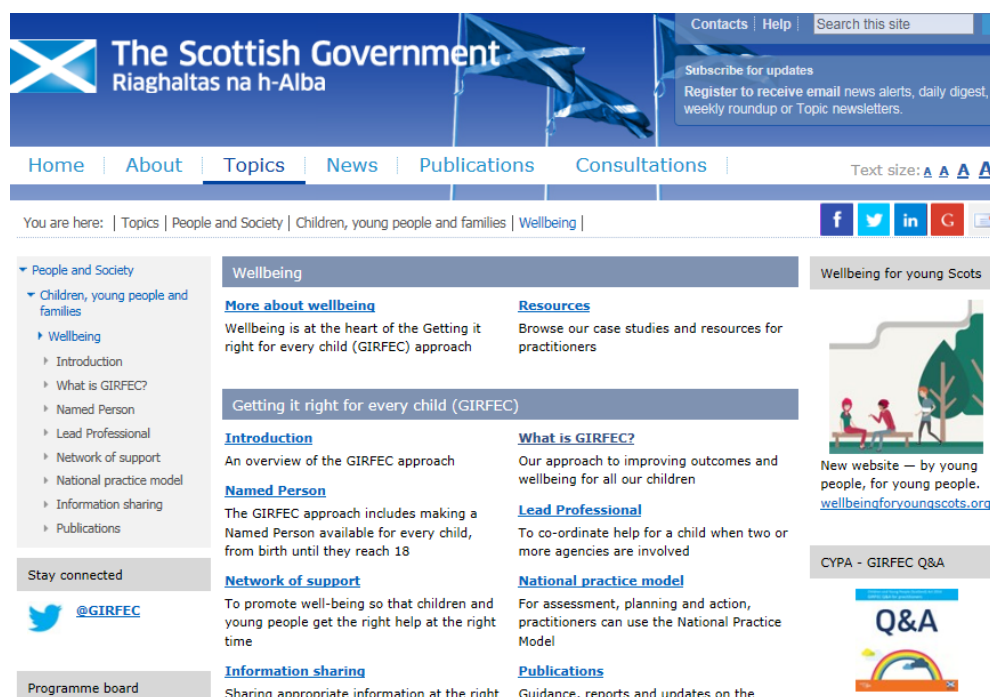
Resilience refers to a *dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity*. Implicit within this notion are two critical conditions: (1) exposure to significant threat or severe adversity; and (2) the achievement of positive adaptation despite major assaults on the developmental process

I will describe the Scottish Government's youth policy and the theory underpinning the emphasis on resilience. As discussed in the literature review in Chapter Two, I will suggest that, although resilience is intended to support young people to 'rebound from adversity, misfortune, trauma, or other transitional crises strengthened and more resourceful' (Seccombe et al., 2002, p. 385), the concept is problematic in a range of ways, from its imprecise definition, to its emphasis on individual assets and behaviours, which can distract from strategies to reduce structural causes of disadvantage, which make young people more likely to experience risk and adversity. I will draw on an interview with Tom, 23, who was working as a residential child care worker, who used the concept of resilience to reflect on his own experience growing up in Pilton and the experiences of other young people whom he met through his job as a youth worker. Tom's account demonstrates that the range of meanings that resilience can have affects its applicability in thinking about young people's needs. At worst, it can reinforce feelings of individual responsibility and failure for circumstances over which young people have no control, due to their

social circumstances. I will consider Luthar et al.'s (2000b) definition of resilience, as outlined above, and suggest that most – 23 out of 26 - of the young people interviewed in this study have had experiences that Luthar et al. (2000b) would suggest might require 'resilient' responses. However, regardless of the ethics of labelling young people resilient or not, as a snapshot, this study is insufficient to enable me to draw conclusions about young people's long term social functioning, with any degree of certainty.

While avoiding the labelling of young people, I will discuss whether young people displayed characteristics deemed by Howard et al. (1999) to indicate resilient personalities, including 'social competence, problem solving skills, autonomy and a sense of purpose and a future' (Howard et al., 1999, p. 311). I will also apply the tests of Williams et al. (2001) to consider whether young people were imbued with characteristics which they deemed to denote resilience: being determined and in possession of a 'meaning and purpose' in life; caring for themselves and being open to receiving help from others.

In my conclusions, I will note that there is insufficient evidence to support Seccombe et al.'s (2002) contention that young people are necessarily strengthened or more resourceful by having faced adversities. In my final statements, I will argue that developing resilience may have a place in youth policy but that there needs to be more emphasis not just on supporting individuals to bounce back from adversities but also to make the latter less likely to occur. As Wilkinson and Pickett (2009, 2007) have argued, actions to reduce structural inequalities leads to a wide range of social benefits. In Pilton, this would include reducing the need for individual young people in Pilton to be resilient.



**Figure 11.1: GIRFEC – ‘Getting it Right for Every Child’ (Scottish Government, 2015b)**

## **Scottish youth policy – support, management and control**

The focus in Scottish government youth policy, laid out in ‘Getting it Right for Every Child’ (GIRFEC) has been to ‘have in place a network of support to promote well-being so that children and young people get the right help at the right time’ (Scottish Government, 2012, p. 12). GIRFEC makes clear the Scottish government’s belief that the network of support for young people should come in the first instance from the family, community and universal services. When these cannot cope, specialist services will be called in. GIRFEC states that children and young people’s safety is the top priority, supporting immediate action by the state ‘where necessary’ (Scottish Government, 2012, p. 12) to keep children or young people safe. Broader intended outcomes are also defined, including the intention that young people in Scotland ‘are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens’ (Scottish Government, 2016) GIRFEC is intended to provide a consistent way to work with all young people, including teenagers, and to provide a framework for

practitioners in adult services who work with parents and carers. The model should therefore offer a supportive framework for the young people in this study, preventative but interventionist where required.



**Figure 11.2: The GIRFEC 'Resilience' model (Scottish Government, 2012)**

There is a disjuncture between the Scottish Government's (2012) 'Resilience model' (Figure 11.2), which illustrates the onion-like layers of protection that it intends to provide for young people and Elias' view of the world. The GIRFEC perspective is similar to that laid out in Figure 11.3, which Elias (1978, p.14) criticises as 'naïvely egocentric' in its modelling of social relationships with the individual at the centre, fanning out to 'wider' society. Elias argues that such a view encourages the impression that 'society is made up of structures external to oneself, the individual, and that the individual is at one and the same time surrounded by society yet cut off from it by some invisible barrier' (Elias, 1978, p. 15). Elias proposes instead, a reframing of the concept of 'society', as implied by Figure 11.4, where people make up webs of interdependence and figurations of many

kinds, characterised by power imbalances such as families, schools, towns, social strata and states. Such a reorientation would recognise that social forces are exerted by people over each other and over themselves, and that they do not exist independently of people.

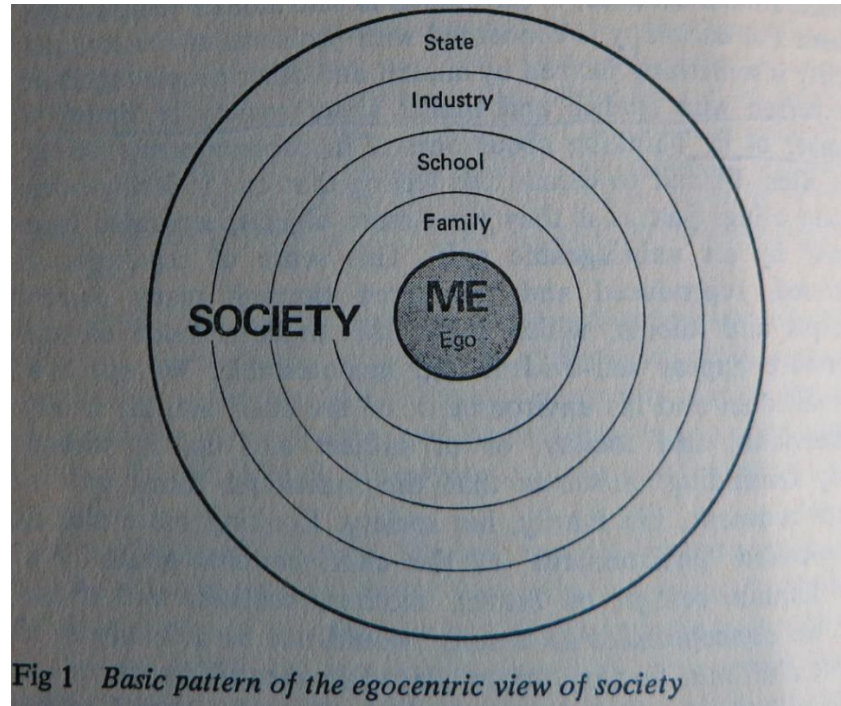


Figure 11.3: The 'egocentric view of society' (Elias, 1978, p. 14)

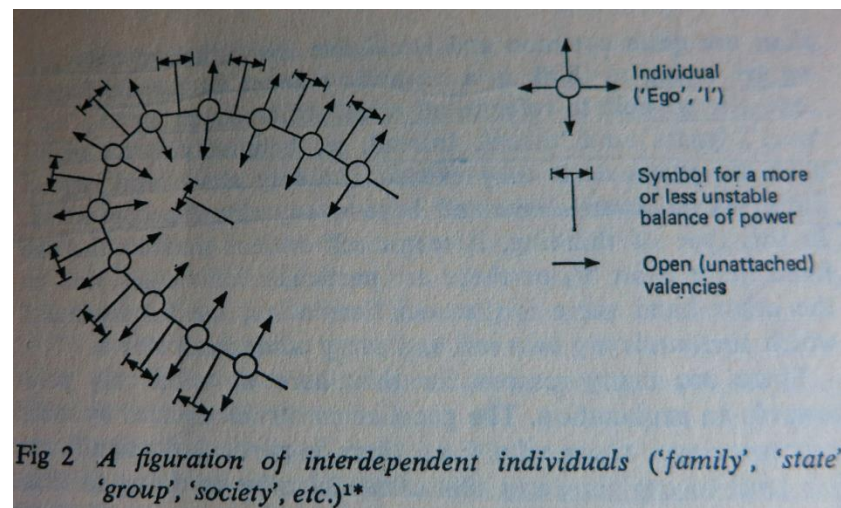
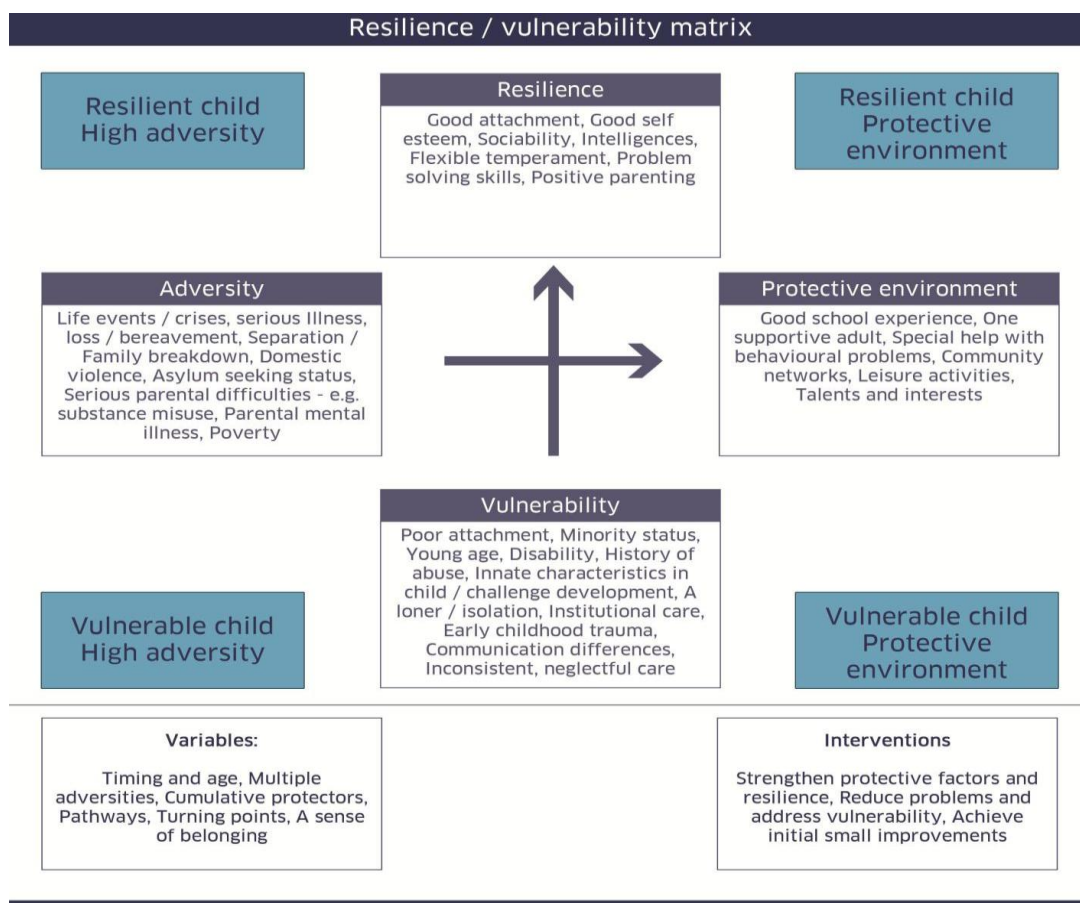


Figure 11.4: 'A figuration of interdependent individuals' (Elias, 1978, p. 15)

Policies such as GIRFEC, along with the 'Curriculum for Excellence' (Education Scotland, 2015), which covers educational settings, and the national Youth Work Strategy (Scottish Government, 2014b), are based on what France (2008a) has described as an underlying presupposition that cognitive development and rational thinking strategies are central human traits. Within such contexts, France (2008a) argues that teenagers' and young adults' failure to conform with 'mainstream' norms, for example by indulging in criminal behaviours, is explained by suggesting that individual young people have failed to learn norms, or adults have not given clear messages about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. It is assumed that central causes of social exclusion are the actions and choices young people take themselves and 'a core function of social policy is seen as disciplining and punishing' young people (France, 2008a, p. 503). For example, as discussed in Chapter Ten, young people in Pilton experience behaviours of authority figures, notably the police, as being concerned with controlling their behaviour, rather than protecting them or looking after their welfare. Only youth workers were consistently praised for having a different attitude, more concerned for young people's well-being.

GIRFEC's National Practice Model (Scottish Government, 2012a) includes a 'Resilience Matrix', Figure 11.5, for practitioners to use in assessing a young person's needs and selecting appropriate interventions. It gives some indicators of what, for example, a protective environment might look like and how to assess a child or young person's resilience.





**Figure 11.5: Resilience matrix**  
(Scottish Government, 2012, p. 24)

The Scottish Government acknowledges that resilience has often been a difficult concept for child and youth practitioners to incorporate into their assessments, stating that, 'As such, its use within the National Practice Model has been the most difficult to understand' (Scottish Government, 2012, p. 22). The evidence base for the policy offers some indications as to why this might be the case. The Scottish policy is based on the work of the International Resilience Project which conducted research 'primarily to determine pathological or risk factors with which children coped in life' (Grotberg, 1996)<sup>14</sup>. The researchers themselves acknowledged that there was a lack of consensus about the domain covered by the construct of resilience. Nonetheless, they sought to determine how children became

<sup>14</sup> I accessed the two Grotberg papers on-line at <http://resilnet.uiuc.edu/library/grotb97a.html> (Accessed 30 March 2015). No page numbers.

resilient, how they developed the resilience features and how resilience could be promoted. The project ended up by defining resilience as:

a universal capacity which allows a person, group or community to prevent, minimize or overcome the damaging effects of adversity (Grotberg, 1995).

This is an unhelpfully broad and imprecise definition. For example, preventing adversity is different from minimising or overcoming its effects. The International Resilience Project researchers also held strongly normative ideas about what constitutes successful responses to challenges (Catalano et al., 2004). The instruments used by the researchers in the different countries where they carried out research were: 15 situations of adversity to which adults and children were asked to respond; a checklist of 15 statements that, for them, indicate resilience in a child: three standardised tests; and actual experiences of adversity reported by respondents together with their own reactions to these situations (Grotberg, 1996). In the end, the researchers concluded that most adults who were caring for children failed to instil the intended normative resilience factors in their children – ‘fewer than half of the adults caring for children promote resilience in them’ (Grotberg, 1996). In these circumstances, it would surely have been appropriate to interrogate the theory rather than to deem that the adult carers – and, by association, the young people - had failed. It is difficult to comprehend how a model that shows that most parents and carers, across cultural settings ‘fail’ their young people could purport to be the assets-based approach that academics such as Walsh (1998) claim for resilience. Nonetheless, this is the model that Scottish youth policy implies can best support vulnerable young people in places like Pilton.

### **Resilience, according to Tom**

Tom, 23, said that resilience was ‘just about survival’. At the time of our interview, he was working in a residential care home for young people. He



referred to himself as having had resilience, which had enabled him to get through difficult situations and to succeed in education. He suggested that instilling resilience in young people with whom he worked was a priority.

Tom described his own aspiration, hard work and achievements in education and in securing a job. He talked about having had a lot of setbacks in his studies, including disputes with teachers and staff at college and University whom he believed undervalued and discriminated against him. He also mentioned that he had been very upset when his father had a heart attack while he was at high school. He implied two meanings of resilience in overcoming these adversities. The first meant downplaying for himself when serious adversities occurred:

Tom: I kind of generally just get on with things.

Me: So what made you able to do that?

Tom: 'Resilience' would be the easiest one.

Me: What's 'resilience'?

Tom: Being able to deal with the shit that happens.

Me: But how do you become resilient?

Tom: By not looking at it negatively what happens; looking at it as 'There's a wee bump!'

The second meaning of resilience that Tom applied, specifically referring to situations such as 'family loss', entailed 'just getting on with things and not letting anybody know that things are going wrong'. One problem with this approach is that not discussing problems might sometimes cause more problems for young people than it solves.

For the young people with whom he worked, and for many of his friends, Tom employed rather different meanings: one sense of resilience was that people should expect to be disappointed or to fail, to be what he called, 'realistic' about their opportunities. For example, he described how he would aim to instil a lack of hope in the young people with whom he worked, illustrating his rationale for this with a story of a friend who had

been excited to find a new job but had soon afterwards been made redundant. Tom had 'joked' with his friend that this might happen before it did:

So like, a lot of the kids I'm thinking about now who are hitting fifteen, sixteen. Have high hope that they're gonna get a job once they leave school, it's to teach them that resilience, that there's all these other things that are gonna stop you doing that. So you need to be prepared for the worst essentially. Like I've had loads of setbacks and seeing things pause along. But it's quite ironic now. I get on with things now, don't really bother. Whereas recently, one of my friends went to work for (shop name) and I made a joke wi' him after they said they were going into administration – 'Oh, your jobs'll be up by the end of the week' and he was under the impression they were 28 days before they go into administration properly. They got the phone call on the Friday, I sort of phoned him on the Wednesday and it was, that was it, everyone's fired.

Tom altered the way he defined resilience and he usually attributed its meaning to the characteristics of individuals, with little awareness of different social contexts. This was demonstrated when he suggested that one young man with whom he worked was 'resilient' when he was in the residential care setting as he was well-behaved and did not get into trouble. This changed when he went back home:

Tom: To give you an example, one of the kids goes home. He gets everything right when he's here, never an issue, in terms of him being resilient.

Me: He doesn't have to be resilient. Exactly.

Tom: But when he's at home he gets involved with the local young people who, some of them are constant charges, breach of the piece this, young offenders, this sort of stuff. At home, he's smoking, drinking when he's at home. We found out from the social worker he's had numerous charges. So in terms of him being

resilient in his community, he's not able to differentiate between how he's being resilient at work and we ask and how it relates to his home life. So he may be resilient on the front but actually when there's not all those people around, the links and contacts, he's not resilient. He's just a sheep, he just follows.

I got the sense that Tom did not understand me when I questioned his use of the resilience paradigm in the two different settings. My point was that, if you do not have the environmental adversities or temptations, you do not need to be resilient as there is nothing to overcome or withstand. Tom's observed behaviour 'improvement' of the young man in the care setting was to do with it being a more controlled and structured environment than the home setting, rather than it indicating personal qualities of this individual. Tom's final comment that this young man is 'just a sheep, he just follows' might be applicable in either context.

### **'Significant threat' or 'serious adversity' (Luthar et al., 2000b)**

Many people, not just young people, cope with what seem to others to be extraordinary situations, by accepting them or by managing them away in their heads; perhaps not noticing their seriousness by not sharing the same moral or emotional standpoint. My subjective analysis from the descriptions of the experiences of 23 out of 26 interviewees in Pilton suggests that they had been exposed to 'significant threat or severe adversity' (Luthar et al., 2000b, p. 543). Table 11.1 summarises key themes. I have taken as read the common experiences for all young Piltoners, to some degree, of stigma and social and economic marginalisation and/or deprivation. I have also assumed that by internalising anxieties and not reaching out to ask for help and advice when they are worried or something troubling happens, young people become more vulnerable. Most young people in Pilton have little trust in the police and criminal justice networks to offer them protection from violence and I have not listed that structural deficiency as a separate threat here. Neither have I drawn normative conclusions about the impact of

unstable family situations, including the common absence of fathers. I have only included drugs and alcohol as significant threats where young people gave me the sense that use, by others or themselves, seemed to impact to a significant extent on their social functioning. I have included unplanned pregnancy as an adversity, not in a moral sense, but in the sense that it would make transitions more challenging for young people. I have included gaining a criminal record as an adversity, rather than as a threat; however, this does not imply that young people are passive actors in the criminal activities that they describe.

**Table 11.1 Young People's Experience of 'significant threat' and/or 'serious adversity'**

	<b>Significant Threat</b>	<b>Serious Adversity</b>
Andy	None reported.	School experience. Bullying over several years – from primary school onwards. Impact included having to change schools.
Bernard	None reported.	None reported.
Clare	None reported.	None reported.
Donald	None reported.	None reported.
Edgar	<p>Street violence: 'Ye cannae no look over your shoulder. You have to keep a lookout.'</p> <p>Daily Cannabis user: 'The cannabis just keeps me calm and just mellow.'s.'</p> <p>Violent when he uses alcohol: 'Ah cannae really control my temper once I get too drunk'.</p> <p>Involvement in 'gang' fights against 'Muirhousers'.</p>	<p>School experience. Excluded from primary school for 'bad temper'.</p> <p>Mental health problems. ADHD.</p> <p>Unemployment. Described attending one six-month training course and applying for jobs and getting no response.</p> <p>Crime. Charged four times since age 12. Last one for chasing someone with a knife – possession of a dangerous weapon.</p>
Fiona	None reported.	Carer for sick sister - affected school attendance and performance.
Grace	None reported.	Carer for sick mother - affected school attendance and performance.
Helen	<p>Fear of bullying: 'If I wisnae with a bunch o pals in my class, ah'd get my heid done in.'</p> <p>Mother died 2 years ago.</p>	School experience. Wanted to return to school at age 16 and they refused to take her because of her behaviour.
Irene	Fear of 'weirdos' and 'paedos' and 'alcies' on the streets.	Pregnant. Not living with the father (Rob) and plans unclear.

		School experience. Wanted to return to school at age 16 and they refused to take her because of her behaviour.
John	Fear of 'weirdos' and 'paedos' and 'alcies' on the streets. Gay (this could be a threat though he said that he had never felt threatened because of other people's homophobic behaviours).	School experience. Excluded from school 'loads of times'. Describes own bad behaviour but also of being mistreated. Still angry.
Karen	Carer for mother since age 4. Has a council flat in Muirhouse but does not stay there as she does not feel safe there. Several attempted break-ins.	School experience. 'I hated it'. 'I used tae always skive'. 'I was hardly ever there in First Year'. Arrested for assault and breach of the peace at age 16. Spent weekend in prison and fines. Pregnant. Not living with the father, who has two other children.
Leona	Fear of street violence, limits walking in streets and uses car.	School experience affected by significant and long term history of depression. 'I just got so depressed that it was just the worst place in the world'. Indirect experience of violence - Best friend had car fire-bombed. Direct experience of violence – her car was attacked and window smashed by a mob while she was driving.
Mark	Immigrant from Africa – potentially marginalised in overwhelmingly white neighbourhood. Fear of street violence. Says he will react violently to attacks if he has been drinking. Drugs – very conscious of 'junkies'. As well as violent incident to himself,	Direct experience of racist insults and insinuations that he and his family are to blame for vandalism, which he takes as racist. Violent experiences – includes extreme drug-related incident with a knife. Describes a group of young

	describes being approached by 'half castes' (sic) to see if he would be prepared to deal drugs.	people terrorising his mother on their balcony.
Nora	Briefly involved with MCF (Muirhouse Casual Fighters) at age 15. Present at scenes of criminal damage and informed police. Drinking at age 15.	Unemployed for two years.
Oonagh	Describes being around a lot of fighting and drug use. Personal use of significant amounts of alcohol, cocaine and 'drone' – latter was bad experience.	Relationship problems – 'He was a bastard'. Currently unemployed. Series of short-term jobs, training courses and periods of unemployment.
Patsy	Describes being around a lot of fighting and drug use. Personal use of significant amounts of alcohol and cocaine.	House break-in. Immediate and extended family involved in range of criminal behaviour, from theft to violence to 'drug wars' – two cousins in prison for murder. Married at age 17. Currently getting divorced, age 19, after husband had affair. Suffered 'breakdown'. Currently unemployed. Series of short-term jobs, training courses and periods of unemployment. Included giving up one job when marriage broke down – 'It was just too much. It was crazy'. Paid 'cash in hand' for one job for a year.
Quinn	Now part of a group – YPD - 'I wouldnae class it as a gang' – suggests gangs from elsewhere come here – 'They dinnae care about getting charged and they wouldnae care if they stabbed you'. Fear of street violence. Used to carry a knife. Does not now but	Crime. In trouble a lot with police before age 16. Member of 'gang', fights, stealing motorbikes and things like that. Charged twice since age 16 – assault and breach of peace. Got £70 fine. Four friends now in prison.

	<p>feels less safe as a result.</p> <p>Smokes 'weed'.</p> <p>Describes being assaulted by the police.</p> <p>Claims to know how to move stolen goods on.</p>	<p>Two years earlier (on 5<sup>th</sup> November, Guy Fawkes Day) involved in setting off petrol bombs and fights with knives.</p> <p>Has been 'jumped' on the street several times, including being threatened with knives.</p> <p>Banned from driving as he had a moped, was giving someone a 'backie', didn't stop for police and had his licence revoked.</p>
Rob	<p>Smokes 'dope' every day – describes it as way of calming him down: 'You just mind yer ain business, just sit in your own company'.</p> <p>Smokes 'dope' in the street and is outraged that the police try to stop him.</p>	<p>Girlfriend (Irene) is pregnant. Not living together and plans are unclear.</p> <p>Charged 30-40 times – 'stupid stuff, like lighting fires, causing trouble, shouting in the street'.</p> <p>First charge, age nine, was for arson. Contradicts himself about recently being arrested for fighting at New Year.</p> <p>Describes taking 'as an insult' if somebody ignores him and his friends – 'depends on what kind of personality they've got, whether we take tae them or not, and then we'll kinda just go from that'.</p> <p>Part of group fighting with Polish group previous year – 'there were six ae us and about 50 Polish guys. They were all about battering me and my pals. My pal got his teeth knocked out'.</p> <p>Believes police let the Polish off yet they were arrested.</p>
Steffi	<p>Substantial caring responsibilities for mother, stepfather and brother.</p>	<p>Describes emotional abuse at home from mother and stepfather.</p>



	<p>Fear of street violence and 'paedos'.</p> <p>Fear of sexual attack – 'I would not go outside with a dress or anything'.</p> <p>Extended family involved in drug use.</p>	<p>Violence from her older brother when he lived at home – 'The polis used tae come every weekend and take him away'. 'We don't get on at all. Cos when he used tae batter me, things like that, so it wasn't nice'.</p> <p>Gets called names in the street.</p> <p>Man tried to pick her up in his car when she was on her way home from school.</p> <p>Heard 'swordfight' at home and was going to call the police but frightened to be a 'grass' – 'could get maself in trouble when I'm older'.</p>
Tom	<p>Went to school outside Pilton and also went to University. Had to break local friendships.</p> <p>Drinking in groups as teenager – outside or in someone's home.</p> <p>Drugs being used by former friends – 'some ae the guys are upping the ante and trying other stuff' (apart from grass).</p>	<p>Describes substantial conflict with teachers at college and university. Difficulties due to staff absences and believes he was discriminated against. Describes himself as 'resilient' to get through.</p> <p>'Jumped' by ex-friends.</p>
Uri	<p>Constant fear of street violence, though says he was only attacked on the streets when he was in another neighbourhood.</p> <p>Frequent grass smoker – at least every weekend – 'I dinnae really feel I'm harming anyone when I dae that'.</p> <p>Would drink a crate – 12 beers – at a party. However, 'drink makes you violent, it makes you go out and cause trouble and that'.</p> <p>Describes being assaulted by the police.</p> <p>Believes he is discriminated against 'for the way you look'.</p>	<p>Describes childhood and adolescence dominated by violence – 'I used to look out my windaes when I was younger and I used to see people get stabbed'.</p> <p>Says he knows around five people in jail for murder.</p> <p>Describes people attacking his home and the family retaliating – 'My family used tae fight with them cos they were all, like, used tae always smash the windaes and that. And they always used tae</p>

		<p>whip out machetes and stuff'.</p> <p>Describes taking part in battles with Muirhousers on bonfire night, including people getting stabbed.</p> <p>Got his girlfriend pregnant at Christmas and she had an abortion. Told nobody.</p>
Vincent	<p>Exhibits strong racist attitudes and potential to be violent towards immigrants. Makes clear that would retaliate if any family member was attacked.</p> <p>Used to smoke dope to the extent that it was causing a lot of trouble with his family.</p> <p>Lots of drugs around.</p>	<p>Currently unemployed. Series of short-term jobs, training courses and periods of unemployment.</p> <p>Mental health problems – 'Stress is a big problem in my life'.</p> <p>Girlfriend has just had a miscarriage (day of interview).</p> <p>Describes stealing 'tae make money'.</p>
Willie	<p>Exhibits strong racist attitudes and potential to be violent towards immigrants. Makes clear that would retaliate if any family member was attacked.</p> <p>Seems to have a lot of money – e.g. spends £120 on a night out. Says it's from parents.</p>	<p>Currently unemployed. Series of short-term jobs, training courses and periods of unemployment.</p>
Xander	<p>Has taken drugs, including 'grass' and cocaine. Says that he used to smoke 'grass' every day for three years.</p> <p>Says that he drinks at least a crate – 20 – 'Stellas' on a night out. Describes bingeing over 24 hour periods.</p> <p>Believes most people carry knives. Says that he does not.</p>	<p>Describes childhood and adolescence with substantial street violence – 'I couldnae go out and play like a 14 year old. Cos there'd be all that trouble'. 'I used tae look out ma windae every night tae see a fight. Every night'. 'Ah can picture it being a wee laddie, looking out my blinds, pitch black, and somebody's heid just going off the concrete'.</p> <p>Describes having a series of jobs and getting paid off several times because 'I just used tae like take</p>

		<p>the piss basically’.</p> <p>Used to be in a ‘gang’ or ‘group’ that used to go to Pilton or Muirhouse looking for a fight but says he was never involved in stabbings.</p> <p>Knows three murderers - ‘One, I was really close to’.</p> <p>Two people murdered just around the corner – ‘I knew it was outside’.</p> <p>Describes incident at school where an English family were bullied and forced to move away – this is still emotional for him.</p>
Yvonne	Talks about knives and drugs being around.	<p>Working in McDonalds’s but with no security of hours or tenure.</p> <p>School experience: Went to St Augustine’s and experienced what she felt was prejudice by reception staff.</p>
Zara	None reported.	<p>School experience. Suspended from school ‘quite a lot of the time’ for shouting, swearing, fighting.</p> <p>Felt judged as being too ‘rough’ and not ‘girly girly’ enough.</p>

## **Resilience in Pilton**

Having summarised some of the experiences that young people in this study have had that included serious risk or significant adversity, I will consider whether they demonstrated resilient characteristics, as suggested by Howard et al. (1999), i.e. 'social competence, problem solving skills, autonomy and a sense of purpose and a future' (Howard et al., 1999, p. 311).

Based on my interviews, young people have a range of social competencies. Most were very eloquent in telling their stories, while a small number struggled to answer even the most basic questions. Some young people were interviewed in pairs, at their request, such as Irene, who explained, 'Cos like, we don't know you. It's, like, just awkward'. In their daily lives, people described feeling confident within their local community with people they knew. However, experiences of feeling stigmatised meant that venturing into social spaces outside Pilton could be intimidating for many. In terms of problem-solving, given the adversities that many young people experience, they seem remarkably stoic and determined in managing their way through a complex web of problems, including constantly feeling unsafe.

Howard et al. (1999) stress autonomy as a feature of resilient individuals. While some young people in Pilton clearly have drive and ambition – take, for example, Xander, who was determined to be a football coach, Zara and Tom who had their University degrees – it was the interconnectedness of young people with their families and friends that impressed most. In terms of having a 'sense of purpose and a future', being aspirational, as Julkunen (2001, p. 261) has pointed out in a study of unemployed youth in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Scotland and Sweden, 'Coping is not only about the circumstances of the individuals, but also about what resources are available to them'. Rather than considering young people's drifting as a demonstration of lack of resilience, it might be considered to be 'a sensible strategy because it implies knowing when to stop trying to achieve a goal

that is unattainable' (Julkunen, 2001, p. 270). This is what Tom means when he suggests that resilience, which he defines as anticipating 'failure', might serve to protect young people from inevitable trauma.

As in Teesside (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005), the experience of economic marginality and disappointments in relationships meant that planning ahead in any areas of life could feel very risky. As in a study by Newburn et al. (2005), some young people in Pilton have felt let down at critical times in their lives. In response, they drifted into important transitions without seeming actively to make choices. For example, in Teesside, discussing whether or not to start a family, Kayleigh said that she 'had learned 'not to plan anything because it never works anyway'' (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005, pp. 210–211). This attitude is similar to Henderson's (2007) descriptions from her research with young people on socially disadvantaged estates who dream of escaping but make no practical moves to facilitate that. Patsy's comments in Pilton also echoed Kayleigh's sentiments in Teesside (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005):

I feel like you've got to take every day as it comes. And just take each step as it's the way, I dinnae want tae have a plan. Cos all the plans I've had in the past, like, 'I'm gonnae do this' and 'I'm gonnae do that', everything just goes wrong. Like, 'I'm gonnae become a hairdresser'. 'I'm gonnae get married'...I think maybe that's it's just a wee phase. I think it's just a phase. I dunno what I wannae dae. I just dinnae wanna plan it. I feel like if I plan it, it'll go wrong.

In Chapter Two, I discussed the research carried out in the USA by Williams et al. (2001). While retaining my concerns about labelling of young people in the way that they do, I will consider whether there is evidence that young people in Pilton have characteristics that Williams et al. (2001) would consider 'resilient'. Are they determined? Do they have a 'meaning and purpose' (Williams et al., 2001, p. 242) in life? Do they have an attitude of caring for themselves and are they open to receiving help from others?

First, it is clear that most of the young people in this study were not just drifting. Even the 'Drifters' described in Chapter Seven expressed a strong sense of determination and personal agency to do something with their lives, mainly in terms of finding and maintaining long-term employment. Some people expressed determination to be a 'good' parent (for some, better than their parents had been). Many mentioned material ambitions, such as owning a house and a car. However, their current material experiences suggested that even modest ambitions might be difficult to achieve. This study was very different, for example, from Le Grand's (2010) ethnographic study in a youth centre in an area he called 'Satellite Town' in South London. As well as the latter being different in the sense that it was in a multi-ethnic and low crime area, his descriptions make it sound far more affluent than Pilton. At the 'Satellite Town' youth centre, young people paid an entrance fee. In contrast, at each session in Pilton, free food was distributed and usually readily consumed.

The transition process provides opportunities for young people and those around them to engage in 'social dances' (Elias, 1983, p. 262), reviewing experiences and relationships and making changes where this seems necessary. For some, disjointed and emotionally schooling experiences can now be left behind and a new adult identity can be seized, including revisiting education and training opportunities. However, the outcomes for individual young people were as yet uncertain and there was little evidence that the framing of responsibility to succeed in the challenging employment market as individual had opened up what Arnett (2006b) refers to as opportunities for self-actualisation.

Williams et al. (2001) also describe as resilient young people having a 'meaning and purpose in life'. This is strongly imbued with religious meanings, what they call 'a spiritual connection' (Williams et al., 2001, p. 243). The women that they deem to be more resilient see a 'bigger picture', involving a sense of spiritual connection; hope and a sense of gratitude; and an awareness of self in relationship to others. For these authors, this awareness 'translated behaviourally into a commitment to

serve their community rather than focusing on what they can get or, what the community owes them' (Williams et al., 2001, p. 243). In my study, although a few young people went to state Catholic schools and some people described having family members who were religious (such as Mark, the African immigrant whose mother attended an evangelical church), none of the young people described being religious themselves. This did not, however, preclude them from contributing to their community. Fourteen young people described carrying out voluntary work and several suggested that they wanted to build a career in the caring professions. For many, volunteering provides a way of establishing an adult identity and doing something worthwhile. Andy described working as a volunteer at PYCP as, 'changing fae me sorta being the one that's getting the support to being the one to give support in a way'. Steffi believed that being trusted as a volunteer with PYCP was a validation of her maturity: 'I'm sensible and stuff like that. So maybe that's why I got offered tae be a volunteer at PY'. For Fiona and Grace, working as volunteer carers used skills they had developed from caring for sick family members.

Many young people aspire to work in caring professions; of course, this could reflect to some extent the options that are open to them, as caring jobs are typically regarded as unskilled and are low-paid (Toynbee, 2003). However, it would be a misrepresentation to suggest that the limited availability of options was the main motivation for many of these young people in volunteering. Some young people talked passionately about playing a part in a network where they could help others less powerful than them and the fulfilment they got from that. For example, Helen, who had grown up with a younger sister who had cerebral palsy, wanted to work with disabled children and was engaged in training to achieve that. When asked why, she explained that she wanted to make them feel special and to celebrate their difference: 'It's only just making them happy, I think really. And making them feel, making them feel different and stuff like that'.

In terms of caring for themselves and receiving help from others (Williams et al., 2001), there was a wide variety of experience. Some people

described older family members as people they could turn to for advice. The 'Gang of Four' exemplified how, in close-knit friendship groups, young people were more prepared than one might expect to share problems and support each other. A few people, such as Vincent, had suffered from depression, linked to the difficult experiences they had. Rob suggested that he had to smoke Cannabis every day just to cope. Most felt that the school environment had not been supportive and instead, many had played truant or been disruptive in other ways, leading to suspensions and in some cases, permanent exclusion. Several young women described having to take on caring responsibilities within their families at a young age, making the likes of Fiona and Grace complain that they felt that they had not had a childhood. The informal support and style of local youth services was noted by many to have been vitally important in helping them recover personally, as well as in providing advice and support around issues such as developing sexualities. However, many young people were at an age when it now seemed that they needed to move on from youth services. They feared losing the security that was offered. In their place was the precarious world of work and a plethora of training schemes that for many seemed ill-equipped and unlikely to lead to secure employment.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter has considered policy responses based on resilience that are intended to support and protect young people. It has been suggested that the emphasis on developing resilience in young people can be problematic in a range of ways. This includes the theory's vagueness and emphasis on assessment of outcomes and encouragement of normative behaviours that are either unfamiliar or impossible to achieve for young people in stigmatised environments like Pilton. The evidence base for the reliance on resilience theory in Scottish youth policy (Scottish Government, 2015b) has been questioned and shown to be weak.

The interview with Tom highlighted the unhelpfully broad range of meanings of the concept of resilience, including how it can be used to limit



aspirations and emphasis individual responsibility in contexts where outcomes for young people are strongly influenced by circumstances over which they have no control. This is not the asset-based approach that theorists (for example, Walsh, 1998), and the Scottish Government, intend resilience-based strategies to achieve for young people. I have considered Luthar et al.'s (2000b) definition of resilience and suggested that almost all of the interviewees in this study – 23 out of 26 – have faced many significant threats and serious adversities, experiences that Luthar et al. (2000b) would suggest require 'resilient' responses. However, regardless of the ethics of labelling young people resilient or not, as a snapshot, I have not considered myself able to draw conclusions about young people's long term social functioning, with any degree of certainty. I would make clear my belief that, although, fortunately, some young people manage their way through adversities, there is little evidence to suggest that they are not more damaged than strengthened by having had to face these.

Supporting individual young people to have resilience so as to be able respond to adversity and challenge has a place in policy priorities, as life will never be risk-free. However, this research gives fresh impetus to arguments (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009, 2007) for a rebalancing of public policy to focus on reducing social and economic inequalities. This would be likely to have a longer term impact on preventing at least some of the threats and harms that are so commonplace for young people in Pilton.

## **Chapter Twelve: Conclusions and recommendations**

In this chapter, I will summarise key themes and emphasise the important contribution that this study makes to the academic literature addressing the research questions:

1. How do young people in Pilton experience and manage transitions to adulthood?
2. How do disadvantage, stigma and violence affect the daily lives and transition journeys of young people in Pilton?
3. How useful is the concept of social exclusion to describe young people's experiences in Pilton?
4. How helpful is the concept of resilience to support young people in Pilton?

First, I will explain how the sociological theory of Elias (1983, 1978; Elias and Scotson, 1994) has influenced my investigation, methods employed and analysis. I will then summarise contributions that the empirical evidence gathered makes to understanding youth transitions in a context of disadvantage, including experiencing stigma and an ever-present threat of personal violence. This will include highlighting similarities and differences between my findings in Pilton and other similar studies. I will then consider how this investigation has expanded theoretical perspectives about youth transitions, social exclusion and resilience. I will then discuss how the methods employed have supported this as a unique, in-depth and sensitive study, using different sources of evidence to validate my conclusions. Finally, I will suggest areas that would merit further investigation.

## Elias

The focus of this study, the methods employed and the conclusions drawn are influenced by the theory of Elias, which stresses that the individual forms part of the environment, his/her family and his/her society. The youth transitions framework has been presented as providing opportunities for young people and those around them to engage in 'social dances' (Elias, 1983, p. 262). I have focussed on exploring the dynamic networks in which young people engage in Pilton and the figurations that they form, in discussions of their social lives and transitions in a range of situational and experiential contexts.

Elias stresses continuity and dynamism of social experiences. In this study, I have therefore drawn on historical documents and web-based accounts from former residents as part of understanding the present, which is validated by the review of contemporary sources and the fieldwork carried out in Pilton. Elias and Scotson (1994) frame local communities as particularly important types of figurations and I have compared and contrasted my local investigation with their study in the 1960s in Winston Parva, Leicester. In my analysis, drawing on multiple sources of evidence, I have challenged the accuracy of the notion that economic precarity is a novel experience (Standing, 2014) for people in Pilton. I have discussed how the impact of globalisation in Pilton has been to embed and continue experiences of economic and social disadvantage.

I have followed Elias and Scotson (1994) in emphasising the power imbalances in society and their manipulation by different groups. The way that young people, especially in contexts like Pilton, are regarded by others, including by policy makers, is presented as an example of the power configurations that Elias describes throughout his work. My analysis of contemporary stigma has been grounded in Elias' recognition that social relations lead more powerful groups to exploit less powerful groups. Elias' theoretical framework has also been important in influencing my critique of

contemporary notions of 'social exclusion' and 'resilience' theory, both of which are highly relevant in the localised context of Pilton.

The idea that a person's experience can be 'inside' or 'outside' society conflicts with Elias' contention that the individual is part of society; for Elias, notions of 'individual' and 'society' only make sense with reference to each other. Therefore, I have concluded that young people in Pilton may be regarded as unequal and/or disadvantaged within society, but they cannot be regarded as being outwith society. That is simply not possible.

In Chapter Eleven, I have also highlighted the disjuncture between the Scottish Government's (2012) 'GIRFEC Resilience model' (Figure 11.2) and Elias' proposal of a less 'egocentric' framing of social relationships, where people make up webs of interdependence and figurations of interdependencies. In discussing the challenges that many young people in Pilton face in the labour market context, I have therefore avoided blaming them for outcomes which are largely beyond their control, at the same time noting that here, as in other studies, contemporary discourses about individual responsibility, coupled with stigmatising of poor young people like these, can make them feel helpless.

### **Experiencing and managing the transition to adulthood in a context of disadvantage, stigma and violence**

This study makes a significant contribution to the empirical research about the lived experience of young people in a context of disadvantage. Although the findings are specific to these young people in this place and space, there are similarities and differences between their experiences and those of young people in other studies.

### **Youth transitions**

MacDonald and Marsh (2001) have argued that the transitions marked by disadvantaged young people include a range of experiences, including

parenthood, unemployment and crime, interwoven with periods of work, typically in low-paid, casual jobs. There are many similarities and a few differences between young people's experiences in Pilton and MacDonald and Marsh's (2005) research in Teesside. In this study, only one young man had moved out of the family home and no-one reported being homeless, whereas, in Teesside, periods of homelessness were common experiences. However, young people's accounts in Pilton echoed the narratives of young people in Teesside, in the sense of experiencing material disadvantage, impacting on their ability to participate in 'consumer society' and also making engagement in the 'illegal economy' more likely. Young people in both places share many cultural perspectives. For example, young people in Pilton, as in Teesside, expressed socially conservative aspirations, with typical aspirations to be in a two parent family with a job, home and car, despite the prolonged widespread individual and collective experience (and future likelihood) of welfare dependency, unemployment, single motherhood and crime.

As with the findings of many other studies with young people in poor and disadvantaged neighbourhoods, in Pilton, individuals' journeys and destinations are uncertain and unpredictable, involving changes in relationships with family and friends and other lifestyle arrangements. Cote and Bynner (2008) describe the social and behavioural markers of the development of new, adult identities. As in other studies, as they become adult, young people in Pilton consciously and unconsciously change their behaviours. For example, some young people described moving away from street-based leisure activities, sometimes including criminal and/or violent behaviours, and moving into adult leisure spaces, such as pubs and clubs. A small number become involved in political campaigns. For some, adulthood is marked by significant events, such as getting a job or becoming a parent.

## **Social networks and personal agency**

Young people in Pilton consistently claimed that they exercise a considerable degree of personal agency. However, as Elias (1983) emphasises, human beings possess a greater or lesser degree of relative (but never absolute and total) autonomy vis à vis other people. Thus, as described in other similar neighbourhoods (Lupton, 2003; MacDonald and Marsh 2005; McDowell, 2003), although young people in Pilton act and make decisions as individuals, the patchwork of extended family and friendship networks across the local neighbourhood provides a sense of identity and security as well as practical support in challenging circumstances. In Pilton, there is strong evidence that wide ranging and, as in other studies, strong family and friendship networks provide support and a sense of belonging for young people. The most mentioned practical benefit related to the fact that this reduces risks of violence to individuals, with a spread of brothers, sisters, cousins ready to swing into action to protect their family members.

For young people in Pilton, similar to young people's experiences elsewhere, outside the home/family context, the street and the locality are important places to build and maintain social networks. In McDowell's (2003) study in Cambridge and Sheffield, the boundaries that young people experience can be described as geographical, material, cultural and political. This is similar in Pilton, but the evidence suggests that at least some young people in Pilton may feel more marginalised than in the other two towns. As in Cambridge and Sheffield (McDowell, 2003) and in Teesside (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005), although family and friends provide bonding social and cultural capital within the vicinity, a downside of the comfortable familiarity that young people have with local people, places and social and cultural norms is that they can feel inhibited in venturing out of the neighbourhood into new, unfamiliar adult contexts. As well as affecting their leisure careers, this can disadvantage them as they enter into a highly competitive labour market, within which they already start from an unequal position compared to other young people in Edinburgh.

## **Challenging the notion of the ‘underclass’**

In Chapter Seven, this study challenges the notion that people in places like Pilton, constitute an ‘underclass’ that fails to thrive in the labour market because of their own moral failings. Despite their experiences, most young people in Pilton are committed to finding and maintaining paid work, not only as a means of earning money so as to establish an independent – or, more correctly, interdependent – adult identity – but also as a marker of their own self-worth. However, in terms of attitudes to work, as has been found in other studies, hegemonic notions about gender affect attitudes to different types of work; thus, for example, ‘typical’ men’s work is seen as being in manual labour and ‘typical’ women’s work is viewed as being in service or caring sectors.

Nonetheless, there are some significant differences between my findings in Pilton and other studies considering engagement with the labour market. For example, although Standing’s (2014) theory of new precariousness appropriately describes the broadly changed labour market situation in the UK and internationally since the 1980s, from personal accounts, old newspaper and official records, it is clear that poverty and its related social problems - though not ‘cultures of worklessness’ (Shildrick et al., 2012, p. 5) - have been embedded in this locality for many years.

This thesis provides evidence from official data, from employment advisers, and from young people themselves, that young Piltoners face considerable barriers to gaining and maintaining long-term, stable employment. Most of these young people had had disjointed school experiences and few had many qualifications. Finding and keeping a steady job will be difficult for them, with 25% youth unemployment in Scotland and Pilton having higher levels than elsewhere (Scottish Government, 2015). As young people believe that their own actions are key to success, their narratives of challenges were imbued with a sense of personal failure.

In Elias and Scotson's 1960s' Leicestershire (Elias and Scotson, 1994), there was full employment. In contrast to this, for young people nowadays in Pilton, where they do manage to find work, this is often low paid and precarious, representing what MacDonald (2009, p. 174) calls 'a 'new' route to lasting poverty and long-term marginality'. In McDowell's (2003) study in Cambridge and Sheffield, young men were confident that they would always be able to find work. This was not the case in Pilton, perhaps accurately reflecting the reality of the different employment market situations and of the individual experiences of the research participants. In Cambridge and Sheffield, young people expected to be able to continue in the same line of work as previous generations of their families. I also found no evidence of this in Pilton, where young people's transitions into the labour market are often affected not only by the scarcity of opportunities but also because of their lack of confidence to venture beyond limited and localised geographical and social boundaries.

### **Inequality and social behaviours**

In Chapter Eight, I emphasised the importance of young people's leisure transitions, considering these in the settings of the home, the street and the youth centre, PYCP. Many young people in Pilton undertake voluntary work in the community, in caring for relatives and friends and in seeking employment, effectively trying to be 'good' citizens. They have rich and active leisure lives.

However, as Wilkinson and Pickett (2009, 2007) have compellingly argued, inequality impacts negatively on a whole range of social issues. As elsewhere, street-based leisure activities can include some blurring of boundaries between licit and illicit activities.

Various studies (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005, 2002; MacDonald and Shildrick, 2010) have suggested that drug use is an important factor in influencing transitions, including affecting employment opportunities. Statistics show that levels of drug use may be higher in Pilton than



elsewhere in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2009). However, with a few exceptions, there was little evidence that drug use caused significant disruption to these young people's transitions. Although some young people described their own use of cannabis, they tended to see this as fairly unproblematic. Alcohol and new drugs, such as 'drone' were described with far more concern, although use of these was not associated with creating challenges in entering the labour market or in other areas of civic participation. As in Teesside (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005) and in other studies (Green et al., 2000), the heroin use by street 'junkies' is regarded with a strong sense of moral opprobrium by young people but nobody suggested that there was a risk that they might drift into using that drug.

In young people's accounts, there were also indications of other potential harms to physical and mental health, as well as risky sexual behaviours. The local youth services, including PYCP, therefore provide a vital, safe context in which young people can meet friends and have fun, and where they can also access support and advice from staff whom they trust. However, it is clear that, as in other areas of their lives, in their leisure life contexts, many young people are ambivalent about whether they wish to move on to new experiences and unsure about what lies ahead for them.

## **Stigma**

In his seminal work, Goffman (1963) discusses the impact of stigma on young people's self-image as they move into new contexts. There was evidence of effects of this with young people in Pilton. Although they themselves make prejudiced judgements about sub-groups within their own communities, such as the 'irresponsible mother' or the 'benefit-claiming drug addict', some young people also described feeling unsure and embarrassed in contexts where they feel negatively stereotyped. Some young people described consciously creating different identities for different contexts, but they felt a sense of guilt when they did this. I also suggested that the racist views expressed by a small number of

interviewees might be related to the fact that the cohesiveness and focus of new immigrants, especially from Poland, may shine a light on what Piltoners feel are the failings of their own community. In this matter as in other areas of their lives, however, young people had a wide range of responses to growing up in a stigmatised context.

As in other similar neighbourhoods, adults in positions of authority often hold prejudiced views about young people. As in Wacquant's study (Wacquant, 2008), especially in street-based leisure spaces in Pilton, young people often feel approbation from others when they thought that they were just 'hangin' about' or 'muckin' around' with friends. In their research in London, Parkes and Conolly (2010) found that a local policeman had apparently shifted away from interpreting 'anti-social' behaviours of young people as comprehensible responses to contexts of social and economic disadvantage, the 'liberal professional discourse' of youth at risk (Parkes and Conolly, 2011b, p.419), to blaming moral failings of individuals and families. This was similar to my discussion with Ian, a community policeman in Pilton, who argued that the neighbourhood could only be improved if the big families were broken up. As with Parkes and Conolly's findings (2011b), there is a paradox whereby some workers who criticise the stigmatising of communities by outsiders, replicate the stigma in their own accounts. For example, an employment worker, Hazel, who has a good knowledge of the structural impediments to finding work, asserted that this was strongly related to a 'culture of worklessness' (Shildrick et al., 2012), manifested in the attitudes and behaviours of families in Pilton.

### **Violence and lack of safety**

The violent context inhabited by young people in Pilton is the final issue that I will discuss in relation to the empirical findings of this study. I would strongly emphasise the importance of the fear and experience of violence in the narratives of young people as they discussed their feelings about the neighbourhood and their daily lives. However, Pilton is not the equivalent

of the ghettos of Chicago or the banlieues of Paris investigated by Wacquant (2008) or Goffman (2014). No young person described having possessed a gun or being threatened by someone with a gun. Rather, knife crime and physical assault was more common. Nonetheless, as in these other contexts, many young people in Pilton experience 'an acute sense of insecurity' (Wacquant, 2008, p. 54) in their daily lives. In most of my interviews, the first thing that young people described when asked a seemingly innocuous question about what it is like in Pilton was a daily life where one strategised to stay safe and to avoid physical violence, usually from other young people.

The constant fear of violence dominates accounts of young people's social experiences in some other studies (for example, Parkes and Conolly, 2011a). As with Deuchar's (2009) description from his exploration of 'gangs' in Glasgow, many young people felt that violence defined Pilton. However, the young people in my study tended to sound more intimidated than proud of this reputation, unlike the participants in Deuchar's study. Different to this, however, in Teesside, MacDonald and Marsh (2005) heard more about young people's fear of burglary than they did about violence.

Similarly to Wacquant's (2008) findings, but different from MacDonald and Shildrick's (2010) findings in Teesside, which found more equivocal attitudes, in Pilton, with few exceptions, most young people see the police as enemies, who are unwilling or unable to prioritise keeping them safe. The streets are especially dangerous places, while young people's homes and the youth services are usually places of safety. However, from young people's accounts, and from some of my own observation sessions, it is clear that even these places are not always safe. Some young people become perpetrators of violence, as a tactic to ensure that they themselves do not become victims of violence from others. Violent behaviour may have become a social norm in Pilton, confirming Goffman's (1963) theory that this is learned behaviour that confirms individuals' sense of social disgrace and also supporting Wacquant's (2008) assertion that

neighbourhood violence can be a response to feeling weak or powerless within society. However, individuals' motivations for becoming involved in violent behaviours at different times vary. While I reject the notion that young people in Pilton are inherently more likely to be violent than other young people, I would assert that, as with other social behaviours, there is a dynamic interconnection between these activities, young people's social networks and the impact of living in a context of disadvantage.

### **Youth transitions, social exclusion and resilience**

Theoretically, this study validates the continuing usefulness, as discussed by other researchers of the transitions framework for understanding the experiences of young people in a disadvantaged context. The findings in Pilton support other research that has found that, even in contexts with material challenges, young people have a range of rich, social experiences, sometimes confounding the prior expectations of the reader. In examining the narratives of young people's leisure lives in Pilton, this study avoids the errors of many other studies of prioritising accounts of labour market transitions. By drawing on a range of sources of evidence and emphasising dynamic social networks, this study also challenges Arnett's (2006b) myopic individualism and lack of attention to structure and environment, from which his theory of 'emerging adult' was developed.

### **Challenging linearity in transitions**

Many researchers emphasise the risks that young people face in an uncertain labour market situation. This study also offers insights to challenge notions of linear or straightforward transitions, especially in contexts of disadvantage. Young people in Pilton may feel 'adult' in some areas of their lives and not in others. It is clear that there is a theoretical disjunct between the fixed 'start' and 'end' points that policy makers for young people (for example, Scottish Government, 2014a) emphasise and the subjective experiences of young people.

## **Social exclusion**

I have discussed how many researchers have drawn attention to the impact that inequalities in power relationships between different parts of society have had in discussions about the circumstances of young, disadvantaged people. Concepts such as social exclusion and resilience, which had their foundations in an intention to improve their opportunities, have become distorted, to varying extents. Although appreciative that the concept of 'social exclusion' emerged as an attempt to capture the dynamic and multi-faceted nature of contemporary poverty, I share Elias' contention that the idea that anyone can be outside society is nonsensical. Moreover, I would suggest that such labelling of people in places such as Pilton is informed by prejudice, with an implication, based on what Levitas (2005) calls the SID and MUD discourses, that this exclusion is due to their own action/inaction.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the European Commission defines social exclusion as being related to people who are removed from 'the normal exchanges, practices and rights of modern society' (Percy-Smith, 2000b, p. 3). At odds with this, the evidence in Pilton suggests that young people who live there have a rich and varied range of experiences, gaining from and contributing to social networks of friends and families. Several interviewees suggested that the 'community spirit' that used to exist in Pilton has dissipated, but my analysis from observation and interviews is that that is not the case. In Chapter Five, I explored young people's social networks, mainly located within the neighbourhood and surrounding areas. I concluded that, there is strong evidence to support the thesis that social bonds with families and friends are stronger in communities like Pilton than in many other communities, although this mean that young people are unwilling and/or unconfident in venturing out of the neighbourhood, which they will have to do if they are to find work.

In line with other researchers, this study supports the reframing of 'social exclusion' so as to avoid labelling anyone as 'excluded' and to prioritise

actions to reduce structural disadvantages. The experience of not having stable work and being poor makes it difficult for young people in Pilton to establish themselves as adults, with some degree of autonomy from their parents. If they have little money, they are limited in the extent to which they can participate in the consumer economy. However, although few young Piltoners expressed interest in politics, they do engage in campaigning on issues where they think that they might make a difference, such as 'The Wall' incident, described in Chapter Nine. Unlike in Teesside (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005), nobody was without shelter. To varying degrees, people benefited from social services provision, most notably through the services provided by the youth services. Some of their social behaviours, for example, through engaging in violence, or experimenting with alcohol and drug use with peers, bring social capital along with risks of becoming marginalised, for example by gaining a criminal record or being incarcerated. All of these actions must be considered as taking place within society, not outside it.

### **How helpful is the concept of resilience to support young people in Pilton?**

In Chapter Eleven, I suggested that most – 23 out of 26 – of the young interviewees in this study have faced significant threats and serious adversities, experiences that Luthar et al. (2000b) would suggest require 'resilient' responses. However, I have avoided making unfounded conclusions about individuals' likely prospects, based on one interview. Nonetheless, it seems that the 'onion-like' layers of support that GIRFEC (Scottish Government, 2012) is supposed to provide is failing these young people. Many of them had unsatisfactory school experiences, sometimes related to issues that they were dealing with at home, including having caring responsibilities, that did not seem to have been recognised. Few had gained many academic qualifications, though three people had been to, or were currently attending, University. Most feel unsafe a lot of the time and they are severely disadvantaged in the labour market context.

In contrast to the apparent failure of schools, local youth services are appreciated by young people for their ability to work flexibly and without judgement with young people facing challenges at school, at home or in the neighbourhood. Unlike in Teesside (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005), youth services in Pilton were prepared to work with young people beyond the teenage years, if appropriate. If the youth services can build supportive relationships with young people, other services should be able to do so as well. Instead, for example, the police are commonly regarded as enemies, intent on harassing rather than protecting young people. Some of the evidence from my interview with a policeman revealed his belief that, rather than supporting local social networks in Pilton, they should be 'broken up'. I would argue that, on the contrary, rather than acting to destroy the strong extended networks that exist between young people, their friends and families, these should be enhanced.

If resilience is to be a useful concept, it needs to return to emphasising young people's assets (Walsh, 1998), avoiding negative labelling and blaming individuals who fall short of normative expectations in overcoming adversities. The findings of this study support political arguments for more emphasis on policies to reduce power imbalances between different parts of society. These should include, as Wilkinson and Pickett (2009, 2007) have argued, reducing social and economic inequalities that impact on young people in Pilton, rather than focussing on youth policies to make individuals resilient to withstand what are often preventable harms.

### **Observations on the research process**

I will now provide some observations on the research process, which may be useful in informing other research with young people in disadvantaged contexts.

Following Yin (2009), a case study approach, with its inclusion of context and multiple methods to gather, analyse and compare data has enabled me to capture the complexities, multiple perspectives and range of

experiences of young people growing up in West Pilton. The study took a long time to set up, as did the analysis, and the fieldwork took place over eleven months in total. Methods included participant observation, semi-structured interviews with staff and young people and a couple of group discussions with some local mothers. In my analysis, I have prioritised capturing the perspectives of young people themselves. The other interviews were used to provide context and to question and validate my developing analysis. Carrying out interviews with youth workers enabled me to gain their trust that I respected the young people and their social contexts; that this would not be a prurient and disrespectful investigation. This meant that they were active in helping me to recruit young people and they told the young people that they could trust me. I believe that this meant that young people were therefore open and honest in what they shared with me.

If starting again, I would probably be more open with staff from the outset, about who I am, what my perspectives and life situation are. I found that when I did this, my relationships with staff deepened. This was important as they were, effectively, gatekeepers to young people. I am ambivalent about how much personal information I would choose to share with young people, if conducting the research again. The accounts that they would give me would inevitably be coloured by their analysis of what I had told them. For example, I am a gay man. From observing and listening, I knew that some young people had homophobic attitudes. I judged it more useful not to share details about my sexuality and I did not wear my wedding ring when conducting interviews.

The participant observation method that I employed involved becoming part of the social context which I was studying. However, I do not believe that I was ever an invisible observer in PYCP. I was always, to some extent, an outsider. Parkes (2010, p.359) suggests that social research such as this involves, by necessity, some risk-taking if it is to capture real-life experiences:



Perhaps...we should resist the urge to sanitise the research relationship, and in planned and considered ways erode the barriers which keep the dangers outside, trying instead to understand a fragment of the tensions, struggles and violence of everyday life.

These comments are extremely pertinent to this study. In Chapter Four, I draw on Brent's account of his research in Southmead, Bristol, (Brent, 2009), where he discusses what he regards as the necessary naming of the setting of the research. His arguments include that this would give respect to the richness and diversity of his findings. It would also be practically impossible to cover all his traces. For my study, I felt similarly about that latter argument, given that there are only a few places in Edinburgh that have socially deprived populations. Moreover, from my planning discussions with the manager of PYCP before beginning the fieldwork, we felt confident that, along with 'negative' stories, for example about involvement in crime and drug use, we would find many 'positive' stories about friendships, families and achievements despite adverse circumstances. This was of course the case. By being 'up front' with interviewees that I would name the setting where the research was being carried out, while anonymising their personal details, I believe that they were able to choose what they chose to disclose and what they would not discuss. Where I have described problematic behaviours of young people, I have sought to describe and analyse the social contexts and possible contributing factors, avoiding judgement of individuals. Nonetheless, I will always have a slight anxiety that, no matter how hard I try, others could misrepresent my findings. I will challenge this if I come across it. As a post-script to completing the study, I am delighted that PYCP have asked me to come and present some of my key findings in April 2017. They retain a reassuring trust that my account is balanced.

As another variant on the theme of risk, there were some moments when I felt that my safety was possibly at risk in observation sessions, when I felt that my position as the researcher changed due to circumstances beyond my control. A sense of impending violence permeates young people's day-

to-day lives in Pilton. While I heard and witnessed young people's accounts of this, most of the time I did not feel directly involved in such experiences. However, in Chapter Ten, I describe three occasions when, during observation sessions, I felt that I was conspicuous and possibly in a dangerous position. During these events, I felt that some of the young people were picking me out and that was quite intimidating. When things went like this, my position as a researcher was confused and I was not as invisible as I had thought and in a sense less protected. The young people were aware of me and it was reasonable for me to feel threatened by young men deliberately walking too close and by young women who were arguing with each other. At the same time, I did not have the competence to intervene with these young people. I did not know how to interact properly with them when they were angry and distressed.

According to Van Krieken (1998), Elias emphasises what he considers to be the constant movement of sociological thought between involvement and detachment from topics of study; a social/scientific thought develops within the society to which it belongs, and not independently of it. I was therefore prepared to change my approach as I went along, if I thought this would contribute to the quality of the data being collected. I interviewed three pairs of young people together, at their request, and I also allowed one young woman to have her younger sister in the room with her. I am unable to be certain about whether this changed the accounts that people gave.

Within interviews, changing my approach to share my own personal reactions and perspectives seemed to make a significant difference to what young people were prepared to share. For example, when I was analysing my data to assess whether young people had experienced the 'significant threat or severe adversity' (Luthar et al, 2000b, p.543), which might mean that they would need to develop 'resilient' responses, I noted that I got fewer descriptions that suggested these experiences in the first few interviews than later on in the fieldwork. This could have been affected by the fact that at that stage I was more tentative about challenging, giving

feedback and sharing my opinions than I was in later interviews. It is of course also possible that, as word got round that taking part was safe, and possibly even fun, people felt more confident about sharing their honest perspectives with me.

I had to be sensitive in interviews to issues that might upset young people. I occasionally felt that there was a risk of this in some interviews, for different reasons. One young woman who was at college seemed genuinely unable to describe very much about her current educational activities. When I tried to press her, I felt that she was getting anxious and confused and I had to abandon what was beginning to feel like an interrogation. Two young men seemed suspicious about my motivations when I was asking about drugs and drug use.

I have described in Chapter Four having to forget trying to impose any formality during the group discussions with mothers. Instead, I tried to guide the discussions as well as I could, hoping that my recording equipment would be good enough to pick up the conversation. This did work fairly well, though people talked over each other a lot and there was some noise and disturbance from several young children who were present.

Overall, my thesis satisfies Yin's tests of *construct*, *external* and *reliability* validity (Yin, 2009). I have drawn on multiple sources of evidence, established a chain of evidence and checked back where necessary and/or possible to verify my understandings as I was collecting the data. For example, this was the case when I established an additional meeting with a local employment adviser after most of the fieldwork had been completed. My reference to other studies which explore similar themes (for example, Barry, 2005a; Brent, 2009; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; McDowell, 2003; Shildrick and MacDonald, 2007; Wacquant, 2008), render reasonable my assertions that this study's findings can be used to suggest theories about experiences of other young people in contexts similar to Pilton. My rigorous attention to planning and documenting my activities

make the study reliable and adaptable to being repeated again in similar contexts.

### **Future research**

From undertaking this study, a number of areas that would be useful for future investigation have emerged. I will now make some recommendations.

A follow-up study with the same young people who took part in this study would provide useful information about what their outcomes were. As my intention was to allow young people's perspectives to dominate and not to test out a pre-determined hypothesis, this meant that there were some areas where, in retrospect, I would have liked to have gathered more information. For example, I would have liked to have explored in more detail issues related to health. I would also have been interested to know more about the employment histories of young people's families. All of the interviewees confirmed that they would be happy to be contacted again and I would like to explore these issues in a future study.

I would also like to explore in more depth than has been possible the particularities of gendered experiences and the experiences of new immigrants in Pilton. I had also thought that I might have been able to draw more conclusions about the experience of poverty residing fairly close to wealth, due to the geographical location of Pilton in Edinburgh, but young people said little about this. At one stage, I had also intended extending the research to include families. That would also be a useful expansion of this work. It would also be useful to frame future studies through the lens of class.

It would be useful to conduct similar studies with similar methods in other neighbourhoods with comparable demographics. If doing this, I would like to undertake a more in-depth ethnographic study, spending more time working with young people, rather than just observing and interviewing. I

have noted earlier that violence dominates many young people's accounts far more than in some other studies with disadvantaged young people (for example, MacDonald and Marsh, 2005). It would be interesting to carry out a comparative study exploring this issue, including examining similarities and differences in different environments and possible contributory factors, such as, for example, use of alcohol at an early age.

There are too few studies, such as this, which examine from young people's perspectives their range of transitions. Along with MacDonald and Marsh (2005), I would recommend that academic studies of youth labour market transitions should never be undertaken without considering other transitions which interact with these. As argued elsewhere (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005), the exploration of young people's networks and the range of transitions that they negotiate enhances our comprehension of how, in a context of similar levels of disadvantage, there are a range of outcomes for different young people. More than that, it indicates that the reasons for this are not simply down to what has been characterised as 'resilience' of individual young people. In line with Howard et al.'s recommendations (Howard et al., 1999, p. 319), 'future studies should explore multiple conceptions of resilience and take account of the complexity of social systems within which children are embedded'.

Finally, as others (Parkes and Conolly, 2011b) have suggested, we need to avoid seeking linear and simplistic solutions to the 'problem' of youth. Priority should be given to empirical research to understand young people's complex and dynamic social experiences from their perspectives. With political will, this research could inform the reframing of youth policy, the better to support young people in Pilton and similar places.

## **Appendix One: Staff interview schedule, September 2012**

### **Substantive areas to be covered:**

#### **Areas to be covered/ questions to be addressed**

Where do you come from?

What brought you to work in Pilton and why?

What's it like here?

What do you think are the main challenges young people here face?

What are the schools like?

Is Pilton different from other places you've worked? In what ways?

What are the biggest challenges you face in your work? Is that getting better or worse?

Is there anything else you think I should be thinking about?

## **Appendix Two: Pilton Youth Interview Schedule, December 2012**

Record dates, times and venues.  
Record names, giving them pseudonyms in any notes to be shared.  
Record gender  
Record ethnic background  
Record area where they live  
Give a brief explanation of the project. Hand out information sheet.  
Explain how the interview will be conducted.  
Explain confidentiality arrangements.  
Agree that interview can be recorded.  
Get consent form signed.  
Check if they have any questions before starting.

### **Living arrangements**

Tell me where you come from and where you grew up.

Who do you live with? *Prompt re-parents. Who? Working/living arrangements. Fathers.*

Have you got children? If not, do you want to have children? *Dig a bit about agency.*

### **Education**

Are you still at school or have you left? What is/was it like? Did you get any qualifications?  
What qualifications? *Details.*

### **Employment**

Are you working at the moment? Have you ever worked? Tell me about it. *Did/do your parents work? Your parents?*

Have you been unemployed? Tell me about it.

Have you been on any training schemes? Tell me about it.

What would you like to do for work? Why? *How are you going to manage that?*

### **Networks**

What do you do with your free time? Why? *Prompt re music, TV, sport, dress, fashion.*

Who do you hang out with? Where? (Gender differences?)

Are there any gangs in Pilton? Have you ever been in one? Tell me about it.

Is it safe here? Are there fights?

What do you think of the police? Have you ever been in trouble with the police? Can you tell me about it?

Do you drink?

Have you used drugs? Can you tell me about it?

### **Thinking about the future**

What do you think you'll do in the future?

Is there anything else that you want to say to me?

### **Appendix Three: Recruitment flyer**

#### **Experiences of becoming an adult in Pilton: Interviewees wanted**

- **Are you aged 16- 20?**
- **Do you live in Pilton?**
- **Can you spend an hour or so to tell me what it's like growing up and living here?**

**I am carrying out research at the Pilton Youth and Children's Project. I am now looking for individual volunteers, aged 16-20 to take part in one-hour long interviews. The focus is to learn about your experiences living in Pilton.**

**The interviews will be confidential and no personal details, including your names, will be shared with anyone outside the interviews.**

**All interviews will be held on the premises of the Pilton Youth and Children's Project and a fee of £10 will be paid to each volunteer once the interview has been conducted.**

**If you are willing to take part, please speak to NAME or one of the other staff. Alternatively, email me on [ecarli01@mail.bbk.ac.uk](mailto:ecarli01@mail.bbk.ac.uk) or call me on 0750 5081784.**

**Thank you!**

**Eric Carlin**

**This study is part of my PhD degree in the Department of Geography, Education and Development Studies, Birkbeck, University of London. The study has received ethical approval and is supervised by Dr. Paul Watt who may be contacted at: Department of Geography, Education and Development Studies, BIRKBECK, University of London, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HX, Tel: 020 7631 6000.**



## **Appendix Four**

### **Pilton: Parents Group**

#### **Substantive areas to be covered:**

Where do you come from?

Did you grow up here? Has it changed?

What's it like here? What do other people think?

Is Pilton different from other places? In what ways?

What are the biggest challenges young people face in Pilton? Is that getting better or worse?

How do they overcome them?

What makes them successful? How do you help that?

Who else is important for them?

What are the schools like?

Is there anything else you think I should be thinking about?

**Experiences of becoming an adult in Pilton**

**I am spending around nine months at the Pilton Youth and Children's Project to find out from young people aged 16-20 what it's like growing up and living in Pilton.**

**This means that over the next few weeks I will be observing activities of 16-20 year old service users. Later in the year I will want to conduct interviews with individuals aged 16-20.**

**This study is part of my PhD degree in the Department of Geography, Education and Development Studies, Birkbeck, University of London. The study has received ethical approval.**

**The analysis will be written up in a report of the study for my degree. Pilton Youth and Children's Project will be named. Individuals should not be identifiable in the write up or any publication which might ensue.**

**If you want more information about the study and/or do not want to participate, please speak to me or one of the Project staff.**

**Eric Carlin**

**The study is supervised by Dr. Paul Watt who may be contacted at:**

**Department of Geography, Education and Development Studies, BIRKBECK, University of London, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HX, Tel: 020 7631 6000**

## **Appendix Six**

### **Information sheet: Staff interviews**

Department of Geography, Environment and Development Studies  
BIRKBECK  
University of London  
Malet Street,  
London WC1E 7HX  
020 7631 6000

#### **Title of Study: Experiences of becoming an adult in Pilton**

#### **Name of researcher: Eric Carlin**

The study is being done as part of my PhD degree in the Department of Geography, Environment and Development Studies, Birkbeck, University of London. The study has received ethical approval.

I am spending nine months at the Pilton Youth and Children's Project and I want to find out from young people aged 16-20 what it's like growing up and living in Pilton. I would like you to give me your impressions. I'll also spend time observing in the centre and will conduct individual interviews with young people.

If you agree to participate you will agree a convenient time and place for me to interview you for about an hour. You are free to stop the interview and withdraw at any time.

A code will be attached to your data so it remains totally anonymous.

The analysis of our interview will be written up in a report of the study for my degree. You personally should not be identifiable in the write up or any publication which might ensue. However, Pilton and the Pilton Youth and Children's Project will be named.

The study is supervised by Dr. Paul Watt who may be contacted at the above address and telephone number.

## **Consent form**

**Title of Study: Experiences of becoming an adult in Pilton**

**Name of researcher: Eric Carlin**

I have been informed about the nature of this study and willingly consent to take part in it.

I understand that all personal data will be kept confidential and anonymised.

I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

I am over 16 years of age.

Name

---

Signed

---

Date

---

—

*There will be two signed copies, one for participant, one for researcher.*

I also willingly consent to being contacted in relation to any follow-up study at a later date.

Name

---

Signed

---

Date

---

The study is supervised by Dr. Paul Watt who may be contacted at:  
Department of Geography, Environment and Development Studies  
BIRKBECK  
University of London  
Malet Street,  
London WC1E 7HX  
020 7631 6000

## **Appendix Seven**

### **Information sheet: Youth interviews**

Department of Geography, Environment and Development Studies  
BIRKBECK  
University of London  
Malet Street,  
London WC1E 7HX  
020 7631 6000

#### **Title of Study: Experiences of becoming an adult in Pilton**

#### **Name of researcher: Eric Carlin**

This study is being done as part of my PhD degree in the Department of Geography, Education and Development Studies, Birkbeck, University of London. The study has received ethical approval.

I am spending nine months finding out from young people aged 16-20 what it's like growing up and living in Pilton.

If you agree to participate you will agree for me to interview you for around an hour. You are free to stop the interview and withdraw at any time.

A code will be attached to your data so it remains totally anonymous.

The analysis of our interview will be written up in a report of the study for my degree. You personally should not be identifiable in the write up or any publication which might ensue.

The study is supervised by Dr. Paul Watt who may be contacted at the above address and telephone number.

## **Consent form**

**Title of Study: Experiences of becoming an adult in Pilton**

**Name of researcher: Eric Carlin**

I have been informed about the nature of this study and willingly consent to take part in it.

I understand that all personal data will be kept confidential and anonymised.

I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

I am over 16 years of age.

Name

---

Signed

---

Date

---

*There will be two signed copies, one for participant, one for researcher.*

I also willingly consent to being contacted in relation to any follow-up study at a later date.

Name

---

Signed

---

Date

---

The study is supervised by Dr. Paul Watt who may be contacted at:  
Department of Geography, Environment and Development Studies  
BIRKBECK  
University of London  
Malet Street,  
London WC1E 7HX  
020 7631 6000

## Appendix Eight: Glossary of terms

aboot: about	endin': ending
ae: of	fag: cigarette
ah: I	faggot: derogatory term for gay
ain: own	fannyin' about: messing around
alcie: street drinker/alcoholic	fannies: idiots
an': and	fae/rae: from
aw: all	fitba': football
aye: yes	gawn/goin': going
aroond: around	getting secure: going to prison
auntie: aunt	girly girly: extremely feminine
awright: alright	giein': giving
backie: lift as passenger on a motorbike	gonna/gonnae: going to
bairn: child	guising: local equivalent to what Americans call 'trick or treat', celebrated on Hallowe'en, 31 <sup>st</sup> October
batter: beat up	goat/tae: got/to
bein': being	grannie: grandmother
blue Wicked: vodka-based alcopop	ground: prevent from going out
bobby: policeman	Guy Fawkes: Parliamentary conspiracist, celebrated on 5 <sup>th</sup> November, 'Bonfire night'
brainy: clever	hangin' aboot/about: street-based socialising
Cs: cunts, derogatory term	heid: head
cannae: cannot	Highers: Scottish school qualification
cash in hand: without taxes	hissel': himself
chav: derogatory term for working class young woman	hoodlum: disruptive young person
cos: because	hoose: house
crash: sleep	hundreds and thousands: sugar coating for ice cream
couldnae: could not	huv/huv tae: have/have to
cuttin': cutting	huvnae: have not
dae/daein': do/doing	intae: into
didnae: did not	jakie: drug user/addict
dinnae/disnae: does/do not	Jamie Oliver: famous television chef
dole: unemployment benefit	
doon: down	
drone: unspecified drug, possibly Mephedrone	
dunno: don't know	
efter: after	

joint: cannabis cigarette	scheme: estate
jumped: attacked	scratch: beginning
junked up: under the influence of drugs	shit: rubbish
junkie: drug user/addict	skint: penniless
ken: know/you know	skive: play truant
kiddy fiddler: paedophile	slider: ice cream served between two wafers
kinda/kindae: kind of	sorta/sortae: sort of
lackey: servant (informal term)	stayin': staying
lassie: girl	steamin'/steamin' drunk: very drunk
lettin': allowing ma/maself: my/myself	smashin': smashing
mair: more	SVQ: Scottish Vocational Qualification
maw: mum	tae: to
mental: crazy	take the piss: take advantage of
muck/muckin' about/about: mess/messing around	teuchter: Highlander, someone from the Scottish highlands
naeone: no one	thae: those
Nana: grandmother	thegither: together
nuh/naw: no	toking: smoking
old man: father	took/tooken: taken
oot: out	toon: town
paedo: paedophile	travellin': travelling
Piltoner: someone who comes from Pilton	urnae: are not
poke: bag	wanna/wannae/wantin': want to
pal: friend	wasnae: was not
polis: police	wee: small weed: cannabis
poof: derogatory term for gay	weirdo: strange person
PYCP: Pilton Youth and Children's Project	wi': with
rapin': raping	willnae: will not
razzie: derogatory term for young working class person	windae: window
roon: around	wis: was
rubber: eraser	wisnae: wasn't
runnin': running	wouldnae: would not
	ye/yeese/yeeze/youse: you



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